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FOREWORD

THIS volume is not a history: and—to anticipate criticism—it does not profess to be a judicial survey of politics since 1880.

It is, however, a study of political affairs from that time by a Conservative, and as such it is published, without concealment or pretence of the writer's individual opinion.

P. G. C.

October, 1925.

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sion of the franchise in 1867 had given urban householders the vote, and, as a result, both Parties had taken some steps towards a permanent national and constituency organisation, politics in the 'seventies was still a select pursuit. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's further effort to intensify the organisation of the Liberal vote was coldly regarded by his leaders. Lord Hartington declined to allow his name to be associated with the movement.

The agricultural worker had no vote. In the rural districts Parliamentary representation was still the preserve of the 'county.' Where there was a political rivalry between two leading families, often extending over generations, elections were fought with the bitterness of personal ill-feeling, and with a disregard of expense which encumbered estates for years with heavy charges. Where one 'big house' held sway, the candidate who had its support could almost always rely upon his return without a contest.

Out of a population of 34,800,000, the whole electorate of the United Kingdom at the General Election of 1880 was under 3,250,000.

Parliament was still a leisurely body, adjourning on Derby Day, rising before August 12th, and not meeting again until the following February.

Private Members were seen, but were not often heard. For the most part, speaking was left to the leaders on either side. Orations were still delivered. Quotations from the classics adorned the speeches. Questions were few. There was none of the persistent heckling of Ministers which is so prominent a feature of to-day's proceedings. Rules for the conduct of debates were simple. Obstruction was not provided against. Unwritten customs prevailed. Business was conducted smoothly, because it did not occur to Members to break down the conventions which made the system practicable.

But there was soon to be a revolution in parliamentary procedure. The group of Irish Nationalist Members, who held tradition of no account, welcomed the facilities which existed for bringing Parliament into contempt. In defeating them Parliament largely destroyed its traditional self.

The General Election.—The General Election of 1880 was a victory for the Liberal Party. To a

greater degree it was the personal triumph of Mr. Gladstone, then in his seventy-first year. Two years before he had professed to retire from active politics, and had handed the fortunes of Liberalism to the care of Lord Hartington and Lord Granville.

But he could not rest in retirement. The 'misdeeds' of his old antagonist called him forth. He was to be the instrument of Lord Beaconsfield's final defeat.

Following a vigorous campaign in Midlothian, for which seat he was the Liberal candidate, Mr. Gladstone entered upon his twelfth General Election with the zest of a political recruit, and yet without that entire concentration upon the conflict which a younger man would have required. 'Travelled forty miles,' he writes during the General Election, 'and delivered three speeches of forty-five or fifty minutes each. . . . Corrected and despatched proofs of *Religion, Achaian and Semitic*!'

He achieved the almost impossible. He 'came back,' but not without embarrassment to his colleagues. 'The principal difficulty, and a very great difficulty,' Lord Hartington wrote, 'is the position of Mr. Gladstone.' But Lord Hartington admitted, and Mr. Gladstone knew, that no Liberal Government could be formed of which he was not a member. 'I do not see how we are to get on if

Mr. Gladstone goes,' is an opinion which Lord Morley attributes to Joseph Chamberlain.

Mr. Gladstone's support was only to be given on his own terms. They were that he should be Prime Minister. Uncomplainingly Lord Hartington put aside his claims. Reluctantly the Queen sent for Mr. Gladstone, who undertook to form his second Ministry.

For almost the next fifteen years Mr. Gladstone governed the country. ' In the eyes of the Opposition, as indeed of the country, he is the Government and he is the Liberal Party,' said *The Times* (December 8th, 1882). The story of those days has to be read in the light of this contemporary opinion.

Queen Victoria thought him very ill, very old and haggard when he accepted his task: but Mr. Gladstone entered office in a state of mental exaltation. ' I do believe,' he wrote, ' that the Almighty has employed me for His purpose in a manner larger and more special than before, and has strengthened me and led me on accordingly.'

While Mr. Gladstone believed himself to be under divine guidance, others were less convinced that righteousness guided his policy. He even placed his actions upon a high moral plane, and resolutely refused to admit that similar considerations affected his opponents. But he neither scorned the use of

language which allowed him to adopt an argument that was not apparent to less subtle minds, nor refused to avail himself of practices which were contradictory to the high principles which he professed. Illustrations of the former will constantly occur in these pages. An example of the latter was the erection of a number of houses on the outskirts of Edinburgh, but just within the Midlothian boundary, in sufficient time to enable the new occupiers to qualify as electors and to vote for Mr. Gladstone at the General Election of 1880. It was sharp practice, but it is defensible, though not perhaps so defensible as it might have been had it been undertaken in the interests of one less addicted to explaining his actions by reference to high principles.

Apology to Austria.—Mr. Gladstone was soon to be tested. The Queen, he says, had warned him 'with some good-natured archness' that he would have to bear the consequences of his election speeches.

An early difficulty, which, however, caused no more than some humiliation to the newly appointed Prime Minister, was his apology to Austria. In one of the Midlothian speeches (March 17th, 1880), arising out of a false report that the Emperor

had expressed views hostile to the Liberal Party, Mr. Gladstone retorted that there was not a spot upon which one's finger could be placed and one could say, 'There Austria did good.' Called to account for his indiscretion, Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister, after some shuffling, expressed regret for 'the painful and wounding character' of the language which he had used when 'in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility.'

TRANSVAAL TROUBLES.—Though humiliating, the apology to Austria was an incident without serious consequences. The difficulties which arose out of references in the Midlothian speeches to affairs in the Transvaal were disastrous.

The Conservative Government, convinced that the white population of South Africa could never have security so long as the Boers were at liberty to antagonise the natives, had annexed the Transvaal in 1877.

Bankrupt, without resources, and hopelessly wanting in sufficient man-power successfully to meet warlike tribes, the Boers nevertheless protested against annexation. The Zulu War intervened. Cetewayo, the Zulu leader, determined, as he had long desired, 'to wash his spears in the blood of the Dutch Boers.' Following his defeat, and with

the fear of their enemies removed by British arms, the Boers renewed their protests against annexation.

The Conservative Government remained adamant. The Transvaal was to form part of Her Majesty's South African Dominions. In Parliament Mr. Gladstone had maintained a silence on the subject; but during the Midlothian campaign the Conservative policy fell under the lash of his eloquence. The Conservatives, he declared, had annexed 'the Transvaal territory, inhabited by a free European republican community.' 'We, the free subjects of a Monarchy, had coerced the free subjects of a Republic.' 'You have the invasion of a free people in the Transvaal.' 'That is the meaning of adding places like Cyprus and places like the country of the Boers to the British Empire. If these acquisitions were as valuable as they are valueless, *I would repudiate them*, because they are obtained by means dishonourable to the character of our country.'

Such was the language which Mr. Gladstone employed with reference to Conservative policy. His words were printed and circulated throughout South Africa.

Here, said the Boers, is our champion; and they rejoiced at his victory at the General Election. They were to be rudely undeceived. In reply to

an address Mr. Gladstone wrote : ' Our judgment is that the Queen cannot be advised to relinquish her sovereignty over the Transvaal ' (June 1880).

The reason advanced was that the question could not be then considered as though it were presented for the first time. The Liberal Government had to deal with a condition which had existed for a considerable period. During that period obligations had been contracted, especially towards the natives, which could not be set aside. ' To disapprove of the annexation of a country is one thing,' said Mr. Gladstone in explanation, ' to abandon that annexation is another ' (House of Commons, January 21st, 1881).

The Boer reasoning was less subtle. ' By the mercy of the Lord ' a British Government was in power whose policy the Boers believed would be based upon ' justice and good faith.' They did not want local autonomy within a South African confederation, however free and complete, and they took care that the Liberal policy, which at this time was confederation, should be rejected by the Cape Colony.

They wanted the repeal of annexation. They looked to the Liberal Government to do it. When it refused, they resorted to force, and opened hostilities by attacking—in circumstances approximating to

treachery in the opinion of some—a small British force (December, 1880).

The outbreak hardened the hearts of Her Majesty's Ministers. There could be no question now of self-government; no accommodation with rebels. 'A rising in the Transvaal,' said the Queen's Speech (January 1881), 'has recently imposed on me the duty of taking military measures with a view to the prompt vindication of my authority.'

'With earnestness, with temper, with firmness and decision, resolutely and promptly,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'we shall re-establish the authority of the Crown' (House of Commons, January 21st, 1881).

These were brave words, and they were backed by military preparations. Then came the defeat at Laing's Nek (January 1881); but the Government would not promise to give more than 'reasonable guarantees as to the treatment of the Boers *after submission*' (February 8th, 1881).

On the same day British arms suffered another reverse (Ingogo). The belligerent mood in the Cabinet waned. Five Ministers refrained from voting in a division in the House of Commons upon Transvaal affairs. In reply to Boer overtures, the Government abstained from requiring 'submission' before negotiation, and decided that upon the

Boers ceasing from 'armed opposition' Commissioners would enquire into the whole question (February 16th, 1881).

Sir George Colley, the British General, despatched the Government's message to Kruger, whom he believed to be at hand, requiring a reply within forty-eight hours. None was received. Kruger did not, in fact, get the message for some days.

Three days after the expiration of the time limit Colley occupied Majuba Hill, a height within the Natal boundary, and an important position if hostilities continued. At dawn he was attacked, defeated, and killed (February 27th, 1881).

The defeat inflamed public opinion; but Mr. Gladstone declared that he would not shed more blood. An extension of the conflict by the intervention of the Orange Free State and sympathetic Cape Colonists was feared by the Liberal Government. Then the delayed Boer reply came to hand (March 7th, 1881). It was not a rejection of terms, and an agreement for peace was concluded. Sir Frederick Roberts, with the British force, arrived at Cape Town, and was recalled within twenty-four hours.

The Boers entered upon the negotiations, with the restoration of the Republic as the sole basis. In effect they succeeded. They obtained complete self-government, coupled with a declaration of

suzerainty to Her Majesty. Foreign relations were to be under British control.

The Agreement was amended in 1884. The word 'suzerainty' disappeared, but Lord Derby, the Colonial Secretary, declared that 'the condition of things which it implied still remains.' British control of foreign relations was maintained, and equality of taxation, trade and residence as between Boers and white settlers was declared (London Convention, February, 1884).

The Liberal Government thought itself well rid of South African difficulties. It had gained no credit from its first attempt to reverse the policy of its predecessors. It had surrendered to force, after three defeats, that which it had refused to argument and appeals to its pledges. It left distrust and suspicion, the fruits of which were again to plunge the country into war.

Mr. Gladstone, says Lord Morley, 'with characteristic tenacity,' was 'not prepared to concede that we made a mistake in not advising a revocation of the annexation when we came in.'

The more general opinion was in agreement with Joseph Chamberlain, who, although a member of the Government, frankly admitted that it had made a mistake in not reversing the policy of annexation (Birmingham, June, 1881).

That the Transvaal was to be the site of the world's greatest goldfield was not foreseen, though in 1879 it had been reported to the British Government that gold had been found in large quantities and that still more valuable goldfields would be discovered. The development of the Rand mines was a later phase.

Fate dogged the Government, and gave it most unhappy knocks. Pledged not to follow its predecessors in the policy of adventures in all parts of the world, it found itself plunged unwillingly into a whole series of foreign embroilments.

After South Africa, Egypt and the Soudan!

EGYPT.—The student of Liberal policy in Egypt will find it impossible to trace any definite design having for its object intervention in and ultimate control of Egyptian affairs.

Mr. Gladstone's interest in the question was lacking. Before the storm broke Lord Hartington wrote (May 27th, 1882): 'I wonder whether any human being (out of Downing Street) would believe that not a word has been said in the Cabinet about Egypt for a fortnight, and I suppose will not be for another week, if then.'

Shortly afterwards the adventure opened. British and French fleets lay off Alexandria. The

Egyptians erected earthworks and mounted batteries commanding the British ships. The British Admiral was instructed to destroy them unless the Egyptians desisted. This they did not do. The British Admiral acted : the French fleet sailed away (July 11th, 1882).

Alexandria was subjected to fire and pillage by Egyptian mutineers. No British military force was present to prevent it. Mr. Gladstone, of whom Lord Granville wrote on this very day that there was no chance of his paying any attention to Egypt while the Irish Arrears Bill was in the House of Commons, protested that a military landing would have involved the ' assumption of authority.' That the bombardment avoided this assumption, and so escaped this criticism, was a subtlety of reasoning which was indicative of Mr. Gladstone's mind. But he was moved at last to interest himself. If other Powers refused their co-operation, he declared (July 22nd, 1882) that England alone would undertake the task of converting Egypt ' from anarchy and conflict to peace and order.'

The adventure cost the Cabinet the services of John Bright, but the Government proceeded with its military campaign. Sir Garnet Wolseley, in command of an expeditionary force, defeated the Egyptian rebels decisively at Tel-el-Kebir (September 1882).

It was a war, said Mr. Gladstone, that was carried out 'from a love of peace and on the principle of peace' (Penmaenmawr, October 3rd, 1882).

The argument was good enough to silence the Liberal and Nonconformist leaders, who vociferously denounced any resort to arms by the Conservatives. But the Dove of Peace failed to find a resting-place. The authority of the Khedive rested on British bayonets. The Liberal Government professed its desire to withdraw, but qualified the wish with the assertion that there could be no withdrawal 'until there is reasonable expectation of a stable, a permanent and a beneficial government being established in Egypt' (Lord Granville, House of Lords, February 15th, 1883).

That day was far distant.

Soudan and Gordon.—The territories of the Khedive extended far to the south, where the Soudanese laboured under the Egyptian yoke. 'A people rightly struggling to be free,' was Mr. Gladstone's description of them at the time a Mahdi, or Messiah, had arisen to deliver them from bondage.

But British authority was maintaining the oppressor's rule. It was almost ineffective, and financially he was unable to enter upon a conflict,

The British Government declined to accept responsibility for the restoration of order in the Soudan. Lord Salisbury's comment was: 'Those who have the absolute power of preventing lamentable events, and, knowing what is taking place, refuse to exercise that power, are responsible for what happens.'

Although the British Government tried to stand aside, the course of events drew it into action. It stood aloof while the Egyptian Government was involved in a military disaster. Then, abandoning its policy of non-interference, it forced upon the Egyptian Government the decision to evacuate the Soudan. Unless they confirmed this opinion, the Egyptian Ministers were to forfeit their posts. 'The responsibility, which for the time being rests on England, obliges the British Government *to insist* on the adoption of the policy which they recommend. Those Ministers and Governors who do not follow this course must cease to hold their offices.'

Such were the terms of the Liberal Government's ultimatum. The Egyptian Ministry fell, another was created; but it was without authority, being pledged to carry out the Liberal Government's policy. The real responsibility for the policy of evacuation now rested wholly with the British Government.

How was it to be carried out? Who was to be the instrument? Fate ordained that it should be Gordon. A few years before he had been Governor-General in the Soudan. An officer on the active list, he was seeking permission to take up an appointment in the Congo at the request of the King of the Belgians. In this connection his name was before the Secretary of State for War (Lord Hartington).

It was natural that he should appear to be the very man for the task. He thought so. The public thought so. Others, knowing him, were doubtful. Baring (later Lord Cromer), our representative in Egypt, would not have had any Englishman go. Lord Hartington pressed. Baring gave way. Gladstone hesitated; then consented. So Gordon went. The British indebtedness for the mission was to be Gordon's passage money and £3 a day travelling expenses! Actually it was millions.

According to British Ministers, Gordon's instructions were to 'report on the military situation of the Soudan and return.' In their minds Gordon was an investigator upon whose report they would ultimately come to a decision. It was a characteristic attempt to put off the need to arrive at a definite policy.

Reaching Egypt Gordon was appointed by the

Khedive to be Governor-General of the Soudan, 'for the time necessary to accomplish the evacuation.' The appointment was made with the assent of the British Government. Thus Gordon was a dual official—an officer acting under instructions for the British Government, and a high official of the Egyptian Government.

From the Khedive Gordon also received instructions. They were, 'to carry into execution the evacuation of these territories, and to withdraw our troops, civil officials and such of the inhabitants, together with their belongings, as may wish to leave for Egypt. . . . After completing the evacuation, you will take the necessary steps for establishing an organised government in the different provinces of the Soudan.'

Thus the seeds of subsequent muddle and disaster were sown. The Khedive's instructions are important in view of the defence put up by apologists for the Liberal Government. No question is raised as to the phrases relating to 'evacuation,' but Lord Morley, for instance, dismisses the remainder as 'two or three loose sentences' which were 'slipped in.' Controversy turns on the sentences which Lord Morley so summarily dismisses. The Khedive's instructions were in advance of those which Liberal Ministers understood they had given to Gordon;

but the Khedive's instructions were not withdrawn, and his appointment of Gordon as Governor-General was not cancelled. Moreover, Gordon was 'authorised and instructed' by the British Government 'to perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government may desire to entrust to you.'

Under the fostering care of Liberals there has grown up the tradition that Gordon brought his fate upon himself by exceeding his instructions. But there is no doubt that British Ministers recognised that his instructions were those which he received from the Khedive. On this point Mr. Gladstone himself can be quoted. In the House of Commons he said: 'The direct action and the direct functions in which General Gordon was immediately connected with this Government are, I think, pretty much absorbed in the greater duties of the large mission which he has undertaken under the immediate authority of the Egyptian Government with the full moral and political responsibility of the British Government' (February 14th, 1884).

This statement, it is true, was made before the Liberal Government had failed to relieve Gordon; but it does not lose its force on that ground.

In February (1884) Gordon was at Khartoum examining the situation. His request was for

Zobeir, a big slave trader, to be sent up to assist him. He believed, too, that Zobeir would be strong enough to hold his own after the evacuation. The request was refused, Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, expressing his view that public opinon (*i.e.* Liberal opinion) would not stand it. Indeed, the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society had already told him that 'countenance in any shape to such an individual would be a degradation to England and a scandal to Europe.'

So Zobeir did not go. Then there came from Gordon a telegram which gave great satisfaction to Mr. Gladstone's apologists. Therein he spoke of the necessity of 'smashing up' the Mahdi if Egypt was to be quiet. As events proved, Gordon was right; but the Government took instant alarm. Gordon, Lord Morley says, had flung the policy of his mission overboard; but Gordon was in fact still declaring: 'I will do my best to carry out my instructions.'

The Liberal Government, however, gave him no chance. It had refused him Zobeir. It declined to consider a modest request for 200 British troops to be sent to Wadi Halfa and Berber. Leave to get out by way of the Equator was not granted. It sent him, however, a set of carefully prepared questions. There was a 'great difference of opinion' in the Cabinet, but Mr. Gladstone, who had drafted

the interrogatories, had his way after a four-hour discussion. One Minister (Lord Northbrook) expressed the opinion that they would make Gordon 'quite mad.'

As they contained the suggestion that he should allow himself to be rescued and leave the rest to their fate, the effect was as Lord Northbrook anticipated.

Though the *questionnaire* was despatched in April, Gordon did not receive it until the end of July. His answer was to the point. 'I stay at Khartoum,' he wrote, 'because the Arabs have shut us up and will not let us out. I also add that even if the road were opened the people would not let me go until I gave them some government or took them with me, which I could not do.'

The Liberal Government shrank from the responsibility of ordering Gordon to leave. What Mr. Gladstone really wanted was that Gordon should abandon Khartoum without direct orders from the Government. As he wrote to Lord Granville some years later (1888): 'Gordon ought, at a very early date, to have come away at his own motion!'

But this Gordon would not do. His accusers charge him with exceeding his instructions. His real crime was that he would not act without orders, and so relieve the Liberal Government of the responsibility for his safety.

One Minister had no doubt that the duty of the Government was to prepare for the relief of Gordon. At an early date Lord Hartington, the Secretary of State for War, was consulting his military advisers as to a relief expedition. Mr. Gladstone, to whom the reports were sent, found them 'most alarming to English treasure and life, and giving occasion for much reflection and deliberation.'

It is doubtful whether the reports received either reflection or deliberation. The attention of the Government was absorbed by the much more exciting domestic controversy between the two Houses of Parliament over the question of Franchise and Redistribution. Lord Hartington could not get Mr. Gladstone to show any interest in his question: 'Do the Government intend to relieve Khartoum or not?' At a July Cabinet, hoping for a decision, he 'got five minutes at the fag-end, and was, as usual, put off.'

That month passed. It would be time enough to have a Cabinet in August, was Mr. Gladstone's opinion. An expedition would be a grave and dangerous error. Preparatory estimates of cost might be made; but nothing was to be done 'to accelerate a Gordon crisis' until other matters had been settled. Under threat of resignation Lord Hartington secured assent to Parliament being

asked to vote £300,000 to enable the relief of Gordon to be undertaken should that course become necessary.

Assent was grudgingly given. Any steps taken were to be 'preparations as distinct from operations.' There could be no expedition without reference to the Cabinet, which was still in the mood that Gordon was treating it cavalierly. 'Gordon has our messages,' Lord Granville complained; 'why does he not answer them?'

All through August Mr. Gladstone was very much a champion of the dignity and respect due to Ministers. He questioned whether it would be fair to Ministers to ask them to take a step in advance without a plan, that they might know what they were about, and be assured that they were not to become unawares 'the slaves of Gordon's (probably) rebellious ideas.' True, the position in the Soudan was a matter of extreme anxiety to Ministers, but there was no way to alleviate it that he knew, 'except much forbearance and giving eventual credit for the best and most considerate intentions.'

'This is a pleasant way of doing business when every hour may be important,' was the comment of Lord Hartington, who unceasingly hammered away at the reluctant Prime Minister, and succeeded in extracting permission to send out Lord Wolseley,

'in case an expedition should be ordered' (August 22nd, 1884).

The decision to let Lord Wolseley go was in effect, if not in the intention of the Prime Minister, a decision in favour of an expedition, for Lord Wolseley, who was to command it, wished to make it, and his political chief, Lord Hartington, had long been emphatically of the same opinion.

But Mr. Gladstone's assent to an advance was not yet given. Not until October 9th, 1884, was Lord Wolseley instructed to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart.

On January 28th, 1885, an advance party of the expedition discovered that Khartoum had fallen. Blockaded on January 5th, suffering from physical pangs of starvation, enduring mental agony as the days passed and no relief force came, Khartoum was, in the end, easily occupied by the Mahdi's forces, while Gordon himself fell a victim to their spears.

The expedition had failed. It was too late. It was too late, says Lord Cromer, because 'Mr. Gladstone would not accept simple evidence of a plain fact which was patent to much less powerful intellects than his own.' 'I have no doubt,' Lord Wolseley wrote, 'that had Mr. Gladstone been able to decide a month earlier than he did the knotty point of whether poor Gordon was "hemmed

in " or " surrounded," Khartoum would now be in our hands.' But Mr. Gladstone would not decide. He would not accept ' simple evidence of a plain fact.' He was piqued that Gordon would not help the Government by leaving Khartoum of his own accord without direct orders.

The death of Gordon aroused the country to indignation. The Queen marked the occasion by telegraphing her sentiments in plain language and not in cipher. After a fierce debate in the House of Commons, the Government escaped defeat by only fourteen votes. Mr. Gladstone exerted all his parliamentary skill in defence of his policy. His speech, coldly received, reached the limit of obscurity. One sentence, it was pointed out, contained a double negative and three hypotheses.

The public verdict was, as Lord Cromer subsequently wrote: ' The main responsibility for the delay rests upon Mr. Gladstone ' ; and, had there been no delay, Gordon would have been saved.

Though Gordon was dead, the expedition was in being. What was to be done? First the Government was for going on. Then Mr. Gladstone urged a complete retreat from the Soudan. Was there to be a further exhibition of pusillanimity?

Happily there came to the Government's assistance the Penjdeh incident. Russian troops

attacked Afghan troops on ground which was about to be the subject of a boundary commission between the Russians and ourselves. Mr. Gladstone found that this border affray dwarfed every other question. Russia was a ' big bullying adversary.' The Russian question was one of ' gigantic dimensions and menacing aspect.' There was need for instant action. It was not now an occasion for ' reflection and deliberation.' There must be immediate preparations for war. There was no question of £300,000 now. He demanded £11,000,000, and got it. Of this sum £6,500,000 was for preparations to meet the Russians in conflict. The balance was on account of expenditure in the Soudan ! Who shall refuse to admit that Mr. Gladstone was not an expert Parliamentarian ! We may contrast the energy shown in preparing for war with Russia with the tortuous procrastination which marked the Gordon relief expedition—and marvel.

The False Prophet reigned in Khartoum—and the people, ' rightly struggling to be free,' endured the terror of barbarism until, at a later date, a Conservative Government took up the task which Mr. Gladstone had abandoned.

IRELAND.—Disraeli devoted his Election Manifesto of 1880 to Ireland. Liberals derided his reference

to Irish affairs as an election 'red herring.' But he was right; and the Liberals were wrong. Mr Gladstone later admitted that he did not recognise 'the severity of the crisis that was already swelling upon the horizon.'

Indeed, so incorrectly did he interpret the situation that he began by governing Ireland in accordance with the 'ordinary' law. The Peace Preservation Act was allowed to lapse. The effect was soon apparent. Before the year 1880 had run its course a Liberal Minister spoke of 'murder and outrage stalking there in the noonday undetected and unreproved.'

As ever in Ireland, the land question provided the excuse for crime. The grievance was the rent. The Liberal Act of 1870 limited the compensation to be paid to a tenant evicted for non-payment of rent. No compensation was payable if he owed more than a full year's rent. Many did. Evictions followed. It was alleged that agricultural depression made payment impossible. Of course the landlords were blamed. The economic conditions which reduced the small tenant to starvation after one bad harvest were not then appreciated. The Liberal Government's remedy was a Compensation for Disturbance Bill. It proposed that a tenant, if evicted for not paying his rent, should be

compensated if his failure to pay was not due to his thriftlessness, but was the result of depression, and he was willing to continue his tenancy on reasonable terms.

The Bill passed the House of Commons, but the Irish Nationalists thought so little of it that they refused it their support. The Bill was rejected by the House of Lords; and it was remarked that the number of Liberal peers voting against it was sufficient to cause its defeat without the votes of Conservatives. Even the Cabinet circle was not unanimous. Lord Hartington—an Irish landlord—was opposed to the measure. These facts are not without importance, as Liberals are accustomed to place the responsibility for all later Irish troubles upon the Conservatives in the House of Lords.

The Irish policy of the Liberal Government was that of the helping hand and the clenched fist. While endeavouring to improve economic conditions, it also abandoned its reliance upon the ordinary law. Before the year was out, Mr. Gladstone was asking for 'a certain increase of power' (November 9th, 1880).

Coercion, 'a hateful incident,' not a policy—thus it was excused—was about to be applied. 'Force,' Liberal Ministers said, was 'no remedy'; but the increasing disorder was driving a reluctant Government to apply it.

In the autumn of the year the Land League got to work. When established in 1879 by Michael Davitt, Liberals spoke of its ' praiseworthy ' objects. They were soon to find that the Liberal Government had to regard its activities as illegal. Its leaders, including Parnell, were arrested, though the intention, says Lord Hartington, was scarcely explained to the Cabinet. Their trial was a fiasco, as it was conducted under the ordinary law ; and, as was to be expected, the jury were unable to agree upon a verdict.

Then followed the murder of Lord Mountmorres, the boycotting of Captain Boycott—to this favourite form of intimidation his name was applied—and a great increase in agrarian crime. The menace moved Forster, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, to demand an immediate sitting of Parliament to grant him extraordinary powers. It was refused ; but, as a compromise, it was agreed that Parliament should be called together earlier than usual—in January (1881). Moreover, the clenched fist was to precede the helping hand. First the Coercion Bill ; then the Land Bill.

The former—officially the Life and Property Protection Act—became law, but only after a revolution in parliamentary procedure. Intentional obstruction by Irish Nationalist Members

was overcome by the Speaker acting on his own responsibility, and, from a sense of duty to the House of Commons, putting the question. The Bill was brought in after a 41 hours' debate. The feelings of the majority of Members had been so lacerated by the contempt which the Irish Nationalists had displayed for the traditions of Parliament that, on the motion of Mr. Gladstone, they granted the Speaker power on future occasions to prevent a minority wilfully obstructing the business of Parliament.

The weapon with which the Liberal Government armed itself lacked nothing in outward appearance. In the words of Lord Morley, it ' practically enabled the Viceroy to lock up anybody he pleased, and to detain him as long as he pleased, while the Act remained in force.' In timorous hands the keenest weapon is not put to effective use ; indeed, it may be a danger to one's own side, and not a real terror to one's opponents.

Such was the case with the Liberal Coercion Act.

Mr. Gladstone himself took charge of the Irish Land Bill, the part of benefactor being more attractive than that of coercionist. Outside the Irish Nationalist Party no one was greatly interested. Its feature was the adoption of the principle of the ' Three F's '—fair rent, fixity of tenure and free

sale. Fair rent courts were to be established. Tenants who paid their rents enjoyed security of tenure. Tenants were invested with the right of selling freely their interest in their holdings. Parnell took particular exception to the rent-fixing clauses of the Act. He employed himself in framing test cases to show 'the hollowness of the Act': and the Land League forbade tenants to make use of this portion of the measure.

In the meantime Mr. Gladstone was himself preparing a test case. To forge a mighty weapon against lawlessness was all very well. To use it only against 'village ruffians' was to bring it into contempt. If that which Parnell was reported to have spoken and done were only partly true, why was he free, whilst lesser men were in gaol? That the anomaly was disturbing Mr. Gladstone's mind was clear from his speech at Leeds (October 8th, 1881). Parnell, he said, desired to stand like Moses, between the living and the dead, but 'to stand there, not as Moses stood, to arrest, but to spread the plague.' If there was still to be fought in Ireland a conflict between the law and sheer lawlessness, 'the resources of civilisation against its enemies were not yet exhausted.'

Four days later the Liberal Cabinet, after a meeting of five hours, decided that Parnell should

be arrested, and lodged in gaol under the Coercion Act. He, with a thousand others, were taken on the following morning. His counter-stroke was to issue a proclamation to tenants to pay 'no rent.' Forster replied by declaring the Land League an illegal association.

The 'no rent' manifesto was a failure; though Parnell's own tenants seized the opportunity strictly to obey it! Equally the Liberal Government's policy failed to diminish agrarian crime. 'Captain Moonlight,' as Parnell boasted, had taken his place.

Forster, whom Mr. Gladstone described as 'a very impracticable man,' struggled on, caring nothing for his own safety, obstinately fighting, but unable to show the results which Mr. Gladstone and his Government required.

There arose a demand by the Liberals for Forster's resignation. If the Government were concerned with its failure, the prisoner in Kilmainham was not less disturbed. 'Captain Moonlight' was proving too efficient a substitute for the Irish Nationalist leader. He had no desire to see the control of the agitation pass out of his hands. He viewed the rise of the extreme element with apprehension. The mental distress of both parties with existing conditions being acute, an approach to an

understanding was possible if a convenient instrument presented itself. The go-between arose in the person of Captain O'Shea, at one time the Irish Nationalist Member for Galway.

Briefly, Parnell offered, in return for a settlement of the question of rent arrears, to reverse the machinery of the conspiracy employed in 'boycotting' and intimidation, and to use it in suppressing lawlessness. Liberals objected to any such term as the Kilmainham Treaty being applied to these negotiations. However, the Irish Nationalist Party's Arrears Bill received a not unsympathetic reception from the Government—an almost identical Bill subsequently became law as a Government measure—and Parnell and two of his colleagues were released (May 2nd, 1882).

This 'new departure' of Liberal policy Forster, not being agile-minded, could not approve. He resigned rather than associate himself with those whom his leader a few months previously had stigmatised as 'marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire' (Liverpool, October, 1881).

In Ireland then, as ever, the most promising situation failed to produce the hoped-for result. There was not to be the peace that was anticipated, but the war that was feared. Just as the Liberal

Government was congratulating itself on the new alliance that was going to make 'coercion' unnecessary, the less complaisant element of the Nationalist campaign struck its blow.

It had planned to murder Forster. He had escaped only as the result of a chance decision to travel to Kingstown, on his way to England, by an earlier train than usual. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Burke, was also marked down for destruction. One day, departing from his habit, he did not leave his carriage at the park gates on the way to his residence in Phœnix Park itself. He drove on to overtake the new Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, who had preceded him. His detectives did not follow him. Meeting Lord Frederick, he left his carriage, and the two set out to walk towards their residences. On the way the murders were done. Four men set upon Burke with knives and despatched him. Without knowing who he was, they also killed Lord Frederick Cavendish (May 6th, 1882).

The crime put an end to the 'new departure.' There was no more talk of an understanding. A Prevention of Crimes Bill quickly became law, after nearly all the Irish Nationalist Members had been suspended. Armed with extensive powers, the Liberal Government pursued Irish criminals.

There were no outstanding incidents, and the conflict in time sank into the obscurity of the inevitable.

Interest was aroused again in the year 1885. The Crimes Act lapsed in August of that year. What was Mr. Gladstone's policy to be? It was not to be reliance on the ordinary law; but there were, in his words, 'shades of opinion'—in blunter language, acute differences—'in the Cabinet with reference to legislation for Ireland.'

The life of Parliament was running out. Mr. Gladstone thought that the Government had 'an excellent record at home and abroad.' Liberal organisers believed that the 2,000,000 newly enfranchised agricultural labourers would show their gratitude to the Liberal Party for giving them the vote by supporting Liberal candidates at the next election. So the need for decision as to the continuance of 'coercion' in Ireland was avoided by the Government by the expedient of resigning through defeat in the House of Commons.

On the Second Reading of the Finance Bill a Conservative amendment was carried by a majority of twelve, the Irish Nationalists, in consequence of a special grievance respecting the increased duty on spirits, voting with the Conservatives. But

Liberal abstentions, not without the connivance of the Whips, accounted for the defeat. Mr. Gladstone thereupon resigned (June 12th, 1885).

MINISTRY OF CARETAKERS.—The period between the change of Government and the Election was necessarily prolonged. The Redistribution Bill had only just been passed, and technical reasons prevented a General Election for five months, until November, 1885. Mr. Gladstone, however, refused to assist his opponents to carry on the Government until a General Election; and it almost seemed at one time that he would have to be called back. But in deference to the Queen's desire that the crisis should be ended, Lord Salisbury accepted office without more than an assurance that Mr. Gladstone would not embarrass the Conservative Government.

Political attention was fixed upon the forthcoming election, the result of which was difficult to forecast, as it was to be fought over an area of redistributed constituencies and on a new electorate in rural constituencies.

The Franchise Act, indeed, was almost the only measure of social legislation which the Liberal Government had found time to pass. It complemented the Disraelian Urban Franchise Act of 1867 by extending the household franchise to the

counties, but it did not become law without considerable controversy. Mr. Gladstone declined to follow the practice of accompanying the Franchise Bill by a measure of Redistribution. His policy gave him material for a campaign against the House of Lords, which refused to pass a Franchise Bill without being made acquainted with the Liberal Government's intentions respecting the distribution of seats. For a time feeling ran high. Chamberlain threatened to march 100,000 Birmingham supporters to London in defence of this measure ; but common sense prevailed at length over obstinacy. The Redistribution Bill was introduced, and both measures became law simultaneously.

There was naturally much manœuvring by the political parties in view of the forthcoming Election. Of the Conservatives it can be said that they did not desire to alienate the Irish vote in Great Britain. The Lord Lieutenant—Lord Carnarvon—went to the remarkable length of speaking in the House of Lords on Government policy, a course almost without precedent. Not less striking was the substance of his speech—a reference to his experiences as Colonial Secretary, and to his deduction therefrom that there were no more irreconcilable bars at home than overseas to unity and amity in self-government.

About the same time—personally, and not acting for the Government—he saw Parnell, as did Mr. Gladstone on occasions. The interview was not, however, public property until twelve months later. The information was disclosed by Parnell, who asserted that Lord Carnarvon and he were in accord regarding the main outlines of a settlement conferring a legislature upon Ireland. This, Lord Carnarvon and Lord Salisbury, who was acquainted with what passed, denied. But the episode, when made public, was naturally enough seized upon by Liberals, who saw in it a counter-balance to their own Kilmainham Treaty.

The Conservative Government adopted a policy of conciliation. It decided not to renew the existing Coercion Act. It passed a Land Act, the first of the series of measures wholly devoted to facilitating the purchase of their farms by Irish tenants.

The General Election was held in November 1885. The newly enfranchised rural voter showed his gratitude in the expected way. The Liberals were the largest Party, but together the Conservatives and the Irish followers of Parnell equalled them in numbers.

The Election had fallen out as Parnell wished. He had the power to squeeze concessions out of the Liberal Party. The leaders of both British

Parties had avoided the Home Rule question as far as possible. Discussing Disestablishment, the record of the late Liberal Government and other topics, they refused to make the Irish question a prominent issue.

Mr. Gladstone's speeches, in Lord Morley's words, had either 'admitted or excluded Home Rule, as might happen'; but Lord Hartington, as early as August, had found 'Mr. Gladstone's state of mind about Ireland extremely alarming.' Mr. Gladstone had, however, expressed the view that 'the call upon us for definite declarations' would be due when it was seen how Ireland voted at the General Election. That was now without a doubt, and the 'definite declaration' was not long coming.

On December 17th, 1885, certain papers published an interview with his son, Mr. Herbert Gladstone. It was intended to prevent 'friendly writers from falling into traps'; but not unnaturally it also had the effect of being regarded as a characteristically devious method on the part of the Liberal leader of declaring his Irish policy. The interview was, in fact, so nearly the truth that an unqualified denial was out of the question. Mr. Gladstone's explanation that the statement was not an accurate representation of his views, but only a speculation upon them, published without his knowledge or

authority, served only to increase the feeling that he had determined upon Home Rule, although he had previously expressed the opinion that it would not be safe to propose it if the Liberal Party in the House of Commons were dependent upon the Irish Nationalist vote.

'The whole stream of public excitement,' Mr. Gladstone wrote, 'is now turned upon me.' Everyone wanted to know what he would do. In his opinion Ireland had spoken; and there remained only to meet her demand. At one time Mr. Gladstone believed that the Conservatives would grant the Irish what they desired. There had been an alliance between the two for years, he wrote to his son Herbert, and it was now at its zenith. He even offered to give them his support in such an action. Others in the Liberal Party were still unconverted to Home Rule. Lord Hartington, indeed, a few days after the publication of the Gladstone interview, had published a characteristically blunt letter in *The Times* reaffirming his conviction of the need to maintain the legislative union. 'Playing the Tory game,' was Mr. Gladstone's comment; and he contrasted it with his own 'policy of silence and reserve.' So resolutely did he follow this plan that he remained in seclusion at Hawarden until Parliament was about to

assemble. He refused to call a meeting of the ex-Cabinet, and on his return to London only saw his late colleagues separately. 'I do not think that any of us like much these separate interviews,' Lord Hartington wrote; but it was Mr. Gladstone's way of bringing the fascination of his personality to bear upon reluctant and difficult supporters.

Parliament met in January 1886. The Queen's Speech emphasised belief in the Union, and intimated the possibility of a Coercion Bill. The 'alliance' between Conservatives and Nationalists, if it ever existed, was dissolved.

The defeat of the Conservative Government was decided upon. But Mr. Gladstone was too old a Parliamentary hand to risk a decision upon a question so controversial, even in his own party, as Home Rule. An innocuous amendment to the Address in the name of Jesse Collings was selected. It related to small holdings, and was popularly known as 'three acres and a cow.'

The Liberals and Irish Nationalists combined on this question to defeat the Government. But the substance behind the shadow was known to all, and it was ominous for Mr. Gladstone's future policy. Seventeen Liberals voted, with Lord Hartington, in support of the Government, and 76 Liberals (including John Bright) were absent from so critical a division.

HOME RULE.—So at the age of seventy-seven Mr. Gladstone formed his Government and embarked upon the final task of his life. With him were many old colleagues, still under the spell of his personality; but outside were Lord Hartington, Goschen and John Bright, 'the people's tribune.' With him conditionally, and 'with reluctance and misgiving' was Chamberlain, and, without condition, Sir William Harcourt, who, in the previous November, believing that the Liberals would be defeated, wanted the Conservatives 'to stew in their own Parnellite juice' until they 'stink in the nostrils of the country.' It was an unfortunate phrase, which, in the course of future events, was to do the Liberal Party much harm.

Chamberlain resigned when the Home Rule Bill was outlined in the Cabinet. The Prime Minister, who was 'prepared to go forward without Hartington or Chamberlain,' was now compelled to do so. The former, indeed, moved the rejection of the Home Rule Bill on its Second Reading in the House of Commons.

It was thrown out by 343 to 313. In the majority were 93 Liberals. The Liberal Party was hopelessly split, and could no longer find shelter, in Harcourt's picturesque phrase, under Mr. Gladstone's umbrella. With Mr. Gladstone were the machinery

of the Party and a majority of the officers, non-commissioned officers and rank and file—all, in fact, who, caring little about Home Rule, believed intensely in him whom they affectionately described as 'the Grand Old Man.' Indeed, to differ from him was regarded by devoted Liberals almost as a deadly sin. The reverence accorded him was put by a witty Irishman: 'John Morley,' he said, 'spelt God with a small "g," but Gladstone with a big "G."' Against him, however, were the Whigs led by Lord Hartington; and the entirely contrasting type, the Radical element, looked to Chamberlain as its leader.

The campaign on the Home Rule question had been waged in the constituencies for some time. In it Lord Randolph Churchill was taking a prominent part. He had already decided that the real rock against Home Rule was the Ulster question, and had invented the famous jingle: 'Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right.'

The General Election which necessarily followed the rejection of the Home Rule Bill found Liberals answering one another on the public platform. On the other hand Lord Salisbury and Lord Hartington spoke at the same meeting. The Election was, in effect, a referendum on Home Rule. The Conservatives avoided putting forward

candidates for those seats which were occupied by Liberals who voted against the Bill. Into the conflict Mr. Gladstone flung himself with marvellous energy, carrying out the usual oratorical crusade and having 'wonderful demonstrations all along the road.' He himself was returned unopposed for two constituencies—Midlothian and Leith: but his efforts were in vain. There was a majority of 110 against Home Rule.

In a frank moment of controversy Lord Salisbury had spoken of races like Hottentots and Hindoos, who were incapable of self-government, and had announced his policy as being twenty years of 'resolute government.' At the end of that period Ireland, he thought, would be fit for local government. So the policy of 'resolute government' was to be tried in place of concessions.

A Conservative Government.—Mr. Gladstone resigned. Lord Salisbury again became Prime Minister, though the Conservatives were not in a majority over all other parties,[1] and the balance of power was with those Liberals who had declined to follow Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy. Lord Salisbury, indeed, contemplated, and was willing to

[1] Conservatives, 316; Liberal Unionists, 78; Gladstonian Liberals, 191; Irish Nationalists, 85.

facilitate a Government led by Lord Hartington; but the latter's view was that a Government which rested on 300 odd Conservative votes, whatever its name, would in effect be a Conservative administration, and so ought to have a Conservative head.

Those members of the Liberal Party who were opposed to the Home Rule Bill were known at this time as 'dissentient Liberals,' but they were, in fact, Liberals differing from their leader on one topic only. The position, of course, gave unbounded possibilities for the 'busy bees' of politics; but those who thought that a reconciliation could be effected in the Liberal camp failed to appreciate the determination of the 'dissentient' leaders to have nothing to do with Home Rule.

Outwardly the political position appeared unstable, as no one group was sufficiently powerful to dominate the rest. Actually it was firm enough to enable a Conservative Government to run its full term of office. The condition was largely due to the patriotism of Lord Hartington and Chamberlain, both of whom were prepared to support a Conservative administration. 'We must all give a loyal support to the Conservatives,' Chamberlain wrote to Lord Hartington, 'provided that they do not play the fool either in foreign policy or in reactionary measures at home. They might count

on some years of power—after which, if Mr. Gladstone is out of the way, the Liberal Party will probably pick itself together again, and, I hope, may be strong enough to turn them out.'

Mr. Gladstone, however, was not to be put out of the way for some years, and by that time Chamberlain had found himself more in accord with the Conservatives than with the Liberals.

But the belief that the breach in the Liberal Party was only temporary was generally held at that time. Lord Hartington writes to the Queen: 'It will be the duty of the Liberal Unionist Party to give to the present Government all the support in its power which may be necessary to retain it in office until the Liberal Party can be reorganised.'

Round Table Conference.—Efforts to bring about a reconciliation were made, but the 'dissentient' Liberals would only agree if the Gladstonian Liberals again became 'Unionists'—that is, if they were willing to drop Home Rule. A formal attempt to bring about an agreement was made in 1887. There was held a 'Round Table Conference,' with Chamberlain as the leading spirit on the one side, and Sir William Harcourt on the other. But as Chamberlain went into the Conference with the determination that nothing would induce

him to consent to a Parliament in Dublin with an executive dependent upon it, and as the Gladstonian Liberals regarded that form of Home Rule as a cardinal principle, and thought that Chamberlain was 'foxing,' the Conference came to nothing. It is interesting to note that Chamberlain, in those early days, regarded the separate treatment of Ulster as absolutely essential to a scheme of Home Rule.

The Conference served, however, to make it clear that, as the followers of Mr. Gladstone would not abandon Home Rule, the Liberal Unionists could not hope for a reconciliation with their former colleagues. Thus an alliance with the Conservatives began to be accepted as inevitable. Though he thought in 1886 that 'it would be too sharp a curve for both him and Chamberlain to sit in the same Cabinet,' Lord Salisbury recognised the trend of events, warned his followers that a Liberal influence was bound to affect the Government's policy, and urged them to accept compromise for the sake of preserving the principle which both they and the Liberal Unionists held so dearly. There were, however, no Liberal Unionists in the Government when formed in 1886.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.—The leadership of the House of Commons, together with the Chancellorship

of the Exchequer, went to Lord Randolph Churchill. He stood for Tory Democracy, and for the fighting spirit in politics. All through the Parliament of 1880–5 he had waged unceasing war against his leaders in the House of Commons—the 'old gang,' as he irreverently termed them. The 'Fourth Party,'[1] which grew out of the Bradlaugh incident, added to the gaiety of politics and the annoyance of the leaders of all parties. Lord Randolph Churchill's power of political invective was unrivalled. Mr. Gladstone he had described as 'an old man in a hurry,' who allowed nothing to be an obstacle to gratifying an ambition. Lord Hartington he had likened to a 'boa constrictor.' His own leader in the House of Commons, Sir Stafford Northcote (Lord Iddesleigh) was 'the goat.' He had been in the very vanguard of the fight against Home Rule, making, with much effect, an impassioned appeal to Ulster to resist. With Chamberlain he was on good terms, notwithstanding the fact that a Conservative meeting which he was to address at Aston Park, Birmingham, in 1884, had been broken up, amid riotous scenes, by Liberals who had obtained admission by means of forged tickets. The Irish Nationalists hated Lord Randolph

[1] Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Sir John Gorst and Mr. A. J. Balfour comprised it. To Sir Stafford Northcote it showed bitter opposition, criticising his lack of energy and vigour.

Churchill, regarding him as the man really responsible for the advances in 1885, and subsequently as the bitterest opponent of their Home Rule schemes. On account of 'his youth and inexperience'—he was thirty-seven years of age—he hesitated to take the Leadership of the House of Commons, but there was, in fact, no one else to fill the place so long as he was a Minister. The appointment gave the interest to the new Government; and it was to provide the one domestic sensation in the life of the administration. He proved to be an admirable leader of the House and a Departmental Minister who retained a disconcerting sense of humour. The test was to be his first Budget.[1] It would have been a comprehensive reconstruction of the revenue.[2] It was laid before his colleagues. 'They said nothing,' he remarked, 'but you should have seen their faces.' He was right. With Lord Salisbury a political antagonism had developed. His colleagues—older men—failed

[1] His Chancellorship of the Exchequer is always associated with the story of the 'damned dots.' Mr. Henry Higgs, in his book, *Financial Reform*, gives 'the story in its true form.' 'A periodical return of revenue received into the Exchequer was laid before Lord Randolph, and his private secretary, Mr. George Glendower . . . was looking over his shoulder, and Lord Randolph expressed satisfaction at the fact that the Customs Revenue had increased by 34 per cent. as compared with the corresponding period in the preceding year. Mr. Glendower pointed out to him that it was only .34 per cent. "What difference does that make?" asked Lord Randolph. When it was explained to him, he said, "I have often seen those damned little dots before, but I never knew until now what they meant!"'

[2] See *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by W. S. Churchill, vol. ii., chap. xv.

to appreciate his impetuosity. At Dartford and at Bradford he had outlined a programme that perturbed the minds of the older Conservatives. In December 1886 he was waging war on the expenditure of the fighting services. In that conflict he failed to get the support of the Prime Minister, who wrote: 'I have no choice but to express my full concurrence with the view of Hamilton[1] and Smith[2] and my dissent from yours.' This was in reply to a letter offering Lord Salisbury the alternative of agreeing to reduction of expenditure or his resignation. Lord Randolph regarded the answer as an acceptance of the latter, and he gave the information to the editor of *The Times*, authorising its publication.

The episode provided a first-class sensation. Even the Queen had not been officially acquainted with the fact; while Lord Salisbury differed apparently from Lord Randolph Churchill in the interpretation to be put upon his first letter and had not regarded it as a final threat to resign.

The Gladstonian Liberals were highly delighted at the course of events, and wrote that it had given them 'a merry Christmas.' The vacancy thus created gave Lord Salisbury the opportunity

[1] Lord George Hamilton, First Lord of the Admiralty.
[2] W. H. Smith, Secretary of State for War.

of renewing his offer of the previous July to Lord Hartington either to form a Coalition Government or to join the Government as Leader of the House of Commons. Both offers were refused.

Lord Salisbury found a new Leader of the House of Commons in the very practical-minded W. H. Smith—'Old Morality' was his affectionate nickname—a type removed as far as possible from Lord Randolph Churchill. The new Chancellor of the Exchequer was Goschen, whose financial skill was known, but his appointment had an additional interest inasmuch as he was a Liberal Unionist, though not a member of the Gladstonian Government of 1880–5, being opposed to the extension of the franchise.

The reconstruction was to have its tragedy. It involved the disappearance of Lord Iddesleigh from the Government, Lord Salisbury himself becoming Foreign Minister. A patient, kindly man, Lord Iddesleigh read of his supersession first in the Press, without a word from the Prime Minister. He came to Downing Street to protest. There he died, in a chair, waiting to be seen. Lord Salisbury, who had never seen anyone die, was grievously affected. 'As I looked upon the dead body stretched before me,' he wrote, 'I felt that politics was a cursed profession.'

THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD.—Omitting Irish affairs, it can almost be said of Lord Salisbury's Government that it has no history—at least, it has none of the kind that lends itself to scare headlines and impassioned paragraphs. It refused to allow itself to be obsessed by the Irish spectre, and consequently its record was an answer to those who declared that no legislative reforms were possible until Irish Home Rulers were satisfied.

It was responsible for remarkable advances in domestic affairs. It established the principle of free education (1891). It made a sound beginning with the provision of technical instruction (1889); and it gave effect to an entirely new system by the Code of 1890, by which 'payment by results' was abolished in favour of the principle of the 'fixed grant.'

The importance of the agricultural industry was recognised by the establishment of a separate agricultural department (1889); and by an Allotments Act (1887) and a Small Holdings Act (1892) definite steps were taken to give the agricultural workers opportunities of advancement in their industry.

Local government was placed upon a popular foundation by the establishment of County Councils (1888). The Housing Act of 1890 was so comprehensive a measure that in all later measures on the

subject, down to recent times, it was referred to as 'the principal Act.' In the area of industrial legislation the Coal Mines Act (1887) was described by Thomas Burt, a Labour leader of his day, as 'the greatest measure of the kind that has ever been passed by the British Parliament.'

A comprehensive Factory Act was passed (1891), and also a measure for increasing public safety on railways, and for reducing excessive overtime (1889). Greater security against loss of life at sea was provided by the Merchant Shipping Acts (1888–9). A Royal Commission on Labour was appointed in 1891 under the chairmanship of Lord Hartington, then Duke of Devonshire. Its enquiries into the relations between Capital and Labour formed a monumental series of volumes.

The record of useful and beneficial legislation was certainly sufficient to justify a measure of pride in the achievements of the Government; and it showed that Conservatives were not indifferent to the needs of reform.

The Government were not less happy in their financial record. The ability of Goschen was shown in the big National Debt conversion whereby the rate of interest on the National Debt was reduced to $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. He succeeded in showing an unbroken succession of surplus revenue, a decreasing

expenditure and a number of reductions of taxation. The Government left the income tax at 6*d.*, the tea duty at 4*d.*, the tobacco duty at 2½*d.* an oz., the beer duty 6*s.* 3*d.* a barrel and the duty on spirits at 10*s.* 6*d.* a gallon. We may well sigh for the 'good old times' of a Conservative Government.

Queen Victoria's Jubilee was celebrated with due ceremony in 1887, and the occasion was utilised to hold the first Colonial Conference.

Heligoland was ceded in 1890; and critics of that transaction, by which we obtained protectorate over Zanzibar, may note that we did not seek to re-acquire it in 1919. The period was one of great acquisitiveness on the part of France and Germany, and, in the belief that our interests were best served by extending our influence over areas of unclaimed land adjacent to our own territories, Lord Salisbury was by no means backward in incorporating vast spaces in the British Empire. Thus he extended it by some 2,000,000 square miles in Asia, Africa and Australasia.

The principle of his foreign policy was the maintenance of isolation. A German alliance was refused (1887), but there was no animosity against Germany. Indeed, with her Lord Salisbury felt that we should be on the friendliest terms.

With France we seemed always to be in rivalry:

Anglophobia was strong. Lord Salisbury's forbearance avoided serious friction, but he could not see in France a virile nation, or any promise of stable government and continuity of policy.

He, however, guided us through all the passing troubles of the time without involving us in serious complications. During the six years of Lord Salisbury's administration not a penny was spent on war expenditure.

IRELAND AGAIN.—The clash of conflict was on Irish affairs. So long as Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal Party were committed to Home Rule, the Nationalist Party had no intention of submitting to any period of 'resolute government,' or of ceasing to demonstrate that the government of Ireland was impossible under the Union. Dramatic episodes were to colour the course of events. The agrarian agitation was still inextricably mixed up with the demand for Home Rule.

The first Chief Secretary in the Unionist Government was Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. But eyesight troubles caused his early retirement. The Home Rule papers rejoiced in the disappearance of him whom they termed 'Mickey the Botch,' and derided 'the palsied masher'—Mr. Arthur Balfour—whom Lord Salisbury had selected to succeed him. It was

they said, ' like breaking a butterfly on the wheel to extend Mr. Balfour on the rack of Irish politics.' There were grounds at that time for this reading of Mr. Balfour's character, for he had, as yet, made little mark in Parliament, and, though Secretary for Scotland, was regarded as a delicate young man quite unfitted for the hard blows and rough and tumble of Irish politics. But the Irish Home Rulers were wrong, and the ' scented popinjay ' was soon being described as ' that bloody tyrant,' that ' cowardly ruffian ' and ' chief murderer.'

The attack had been opened by the Home Rulers with ' the Plan of Campaign.' They fixed rents lower than the judicially fixed amount. If the landlord refused to accept payment, the money went to the funds for carrying on the campaign. Parnell said at a Liberal meeting that he was not prepared to vindicate ' the Plan,' but the Liberal leaders had excuses for it, finding a precedent in the refusal of Hampden to pay ship-money !

The Government reply was a Crimes Bill, without a time limit to its application, as was the case in similar previous measures. In other respects the Act was not so drastic as that which had been passed by the Liberal Government in 1882. Mr. Gladstone, successfully obliterating from his memory any recollection of his own measures, found the Act

' very mournful.' It became law only after a fierce parliamentary fight with both Gladstonian Liberals and Parnellites, the closure, then still a novel weapon, and known as *Le Clôture*, being frequently invoked.

On the Crimes Act passing, the National League was promptly suppressed—an action which Mr. Gladstone condemned in the House of Commons. Bitter controversies arose out of the administration of the Act. The best known was the Mitchelstown case. There, in County Cork, in September 1887, a meeting was being addressed by Gladstonian Liberal and Irish Home Rule Members of Parliament. The police were attacked, and were driven to their barracks, which were then subjected to violence. The police fired, and three persons were killed. A Home Rule description of what Mr. Gladstone described as a ' legal and peaceable public meeting,' read : ' Soon the rattle of the honest shillelaghs was heard resounding on the scoundrels' helmets.' The incident aroused Mr. Gladstone's anger, and he adopted the slogan ' Remember Mitchelstown ' as the Liberal watchword.

The Crimes Act was, however, successful in restoring order. Agrarian crime progressively decreased. The practice of the boycott had disappeared by 1892, although in 1887 nearly 5,000 persons were under that form of intimidation. In

May 1892 only parts of two counties were 'proclaimed' under the Act. It was a victory for 'resolute government.'

Side by side with the repression of disorder the Government proceeded with schemes of agrarian reform and reconstruction. A Land Act of 1887 opened the fair rent courts to some 130,000 occupying leaseholders, and authorised a revision of rents in certain cases. A further Act of 1888 extended the provisions of the Ashbourne Act of 1885, setting aside a further £5,000,000 to finance land purchase. A comprehensive Land Purchase Act was passed in 1891. It differed from previous Acts inasmuch as there was, in practice, no limit to the total amount that might be advanced. The Act obtained the commendation of Parnell, who described it as being of enormous benefit to tenant farmers.

But the Government did more than benefit the Irish farmers. In 1890 Mr. Balfour made an extensive tour throughout the West of Ireland. It was highly successful, and the courteous reception which he received moved the Home Rule M.P.'s to fury and indignation. He had already embarked upon an extensive scheme of light railways for the purpose of developing the fisheries and other resources of the more remote districts; and to meet the distress arising out of the partial failure of the

potato crop in 1890 he had actively promoted relief works and other forms of succour.

A big step forward was taken by the Land Act of 1891, when there was set up the Congested Districts Board, with wide powers of almost paternal assistance to those impoverished districts known as ' congested '—not through density of population, but in the sense that the holdings were in the main too small and unproductive to support a family.

The policy was building for the future ; but it showed—at any rate, on the part of those who were opposed to Home Rule—an appreciation of the economic and agrarian grievances of Ireland and a real intention to remedy them.

Pigott Forgery.—In the meantime Irish politics were shaken with untoward events. During the bitterness of the conflict *The Times* published a series of articles entitled ' Parnellism and Crime.' On April 18th, 1887—the day on which the decision was to be taken on the Second Reading of the Crimes Act—there appeared what purported to be a facsimile of a letter from Parnell, dated May 15th, 1882, apologising because he had, as a matter of expediency, openly condemned the murder of Burke and Cavendish, though he, in fact, thought that Burke ' got no more than his deserts.' It

concluded : ' Yours very truly, Charles S. Parnell ' ; and this portion alone was alleged to be in Parnell's handwriting.

Parnell, in the House of Commons, denounced the letter as ' a villainous and barefaced forgery ' ; but on the advice of friends he took no proceedings against *The Times*. The matter again arose out of an action for libel taken by O'Donnell, a former M.P., who conceived himself to be libelled by the accusations in the articles. Counsel for *The Times* in the case was the Attorney-General (Sir Richard Webster)—in those days Law Officers were entitled to follow private practice—who produced at the trial a further batch of incriminating correspondence. The case against *The Times* collapsed, O'Donnell not being able to prove libel against himself : but the production of this further correspondence moved Parnell to action. He denounced the letters as forgeries ; asked for a Select Committee of enquiry into them, but was offered a Commission of Judges who would not only enquire into the letters, but into charges against ' other persons.' In vain did the Liberals protest against any such investigation ; but Parnell was determined to prove that the letters were forged. The Statutory Commission was set up, and it conducted an investigation into the case of the letters, and into the conduct

of the Home Rule M.P.'s and their organisations for some years back.

It was a long story. Over 450 witnesses were examined. Once a spy—Le Caron—told his story with dramatic simplicity. Then the manager of *The Times* went into the box. He had paid more than £2,500 for the letters. He had no proof that they were genuine. He had received them from Mr. Houston, the Secretary of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union. In his zeal for the Union Houston had been seeking material against his political opponents without exercising discretion. He found a willing agent in one Pigott, a character moving in the underworld of politics and journalism. Pigott, ever needy, discovered a certain source of income in Houston, and had no intention of allowing it to cease through failure to produce what was wanted. His employer, who, of course, was of the fixed opinion that Parnell would stick at nothing, did not test any documents for authenticity. The development was obvious. Pigott, in the box, knowing of what he had done, collapsed under the merciless cross-examination of Sir Charles Russell. The climax was very simple. 'Write certain words,' said Sir Charles, 'for me'; and he dictated them. The last was 'hesitancy.' Pigott wrote, as the word was spelt in the letter, 'hesitency.'

The rest of the cross-examination, with its pitiless exposure of past errors, only further confused the witness. He did not appear the following day. A few days later the news of his suicide in Madrid was received; but before that he had confessed his forgery.

Liberals and Irish Home Rulers were highly elated at this development, and Parnell became almost a hero with the Liberal rank and file. The Special Commission, whilst it properly exculpated Parnell from the responsibility for the Pigott letters, brought a verdict of guilty against the Irish Home Rulers, finding that the mass of the Nationalist Members of Parliament had established and joined in the Land League organisation with the intention, by its means, of bringing about the absolute independence of Ireland as a separate nation, and that they had entered into a conspiracy by a system of coercion and intimidation to promote an agrarian agitation.

The Liberal Party generally did not concern itself with these findings, but there were Liberals who refused to make Parnell a hero or to associate themselves with the Irish Nationalist Party. Among them was Sir William Harcourt, to whom most of the Irish leaders were 'interesting gentlemen in the last stages of debility.'

Fall of Parnell.—Harcourt, as Home Secretary in the previous Liberal Government, had become acquainted with the matter that was so swiftly to transform Parnell's triumph into the bitterness of defeat. It would be a 'horrid exposure,' Morley wrote. When it was made public it was that Parnell had been cited as co-respondent in the divorce case brought by Captain O'Shea, one time M.P. for Galway and the emissary between Parnell and the Liberals. The relationship was suspected by many of Parnell's colleagues, but it was a shattering blow to the Liberal Party. Co-operation between the Irish Home Rulers, so long as Parnell led them, and the Liberal Party was at an end, for, Harcourt wrote to Mr. Gladstone, 'the Nonconformists are the backbone of our Party, and their judgment is unanimous and decisive.'

That Parnell's moral lapse rendered him unfit to continue as leader was the verdict of the Nonconformist Ministers who spoke. With their indignation was the fear, as one expressed it, that, 'unless Parnell abdicated, the Liberals would be absolutely defeated at the next General Election!'

In Ireland, however, the tide was running strongly in Parnell's favour, and at a meeting of the Irish Home Rule Members of Parliament

Parnell was re-elected leader 'with great demonstrations of enthusiasm.'

The Liberals, Harcourt's son wrote, 'were mad, frantic, cursing and crying' when they heard the news. It was a 'horrible scene' from which he fled. But the Irish Home Rulers had acted in ignorance of the fact that Mr. Gladstone had already decided against Parnell, and was requiring, at any rate, his 'temporary' retirement.

When the Liberal leader's decision became public property, and the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops had likewise declared against Parnell, the Irish Home Rule M.P.'s by a majority reversed their verdict. After twelve days of noisy and disorderly discussion Parnell found himself supported by twenty-six colleagues. Forty-five accepted the declaration of the Liberal leader, who, incensed at disclosures in Parnell's Manifesto to 'the people of Ireland' of an interview which Parnell had had with him in December 1889, resolutely declined to discuss any question of Home Rule with the Irish Nationalist Members until Parnell was deposed.

Thus the Irish Home Rulers lost their independence, and for the rest of their existence as a party were never to stray from the Liberal fold. The split had, however, reduced the Liberals to a state of extreme depression. Morley found Mr. Gladstone

'full of cold and out of sorts, but with occasional spurts of intense passion at the wickedness of Parnell, the insensate folly of his dupes, and the want of pluck in his nominal foes.' A 'sad and depressing' time for all Liberals in view of the imminence of a General Election!

Some time before the Election Parnell died (1891), worn out in mind and body, but led on by some overmastering force to fight to the end. He left a distracted party, divided by the worst of quarrels —a personal dispute of intense bitterness. Not until the year 1900 were the Home Rulers reunited under the leadership of John Redmond.

HOME RULE ONCE MORE.—The General Election came in July 1892. Mr. Gladstone reckoned to win eighty to a hundred seats. But the results were disappointing. His own majority went down to 690; and he found himself again in office only by favour of the Irish Home Rule votes.[1]

As a matter of form the Conservative Government decided to meet Parliament. It was defeated on a direct motion of no confidence. Nothing daunted, at 84, Mr. Gladstone formed his fourth Government. Home Rule he regarded as his only pledge, but the

[1] The results were Conservatives, 268; Libera Unionists, 47; Liberals, 274; Irish Nationalists, 81.

Liberal Party itself was committed to the lengthy Newcastle Programme,[1] to which such success as it had had at the Election was due in a much greater degree than its advocacy of Home Rule. But, dependent for office on the Irish Home Rule vote, there was no question that Home Rule had to be the first item on the Liberal Government's legislative programme.

The Bill was introduced on February 13th, 1893. Its great difference from the measure of 1886 was that, instead of excluding the Irish members from the Westminster Parliament, they were to be retained, but were to be reduced to 80, and were not to vote or speak on British questions.[2]

Naturally it passed the Second Reading stage. In committee the guillotine, against which the Liberals had so vigorously protested, was drastically applied. In due course the Bill passed the House of Commons, but on the motion of the Duke of Devonshire it was rejected by an immense majority by the House of Lords (September 8th, 1893).

The Liberal Government, Mr. Gladstone dissenting, decided not to appeal to the country—it was estimated that there was a British majority of 23

[1] Adopted by the National Liberal Federation at Newcastle in October 1891. It comprised 24 items, including Home Rule; Welsh Disestablishment; One man, One vote; Shorter Parliaments; Payment of Members; Taxation of Land Values; Local Veto; Free Breakfast-Table; and 'Mending or Ending' the House of Lords.

[2] In Committee (July 12th, 1893) the provision was altered, and they were to be permitted to vote on all occasions.

against the Bill in the House of Commons—but to continue in office until a general case against the House of Lords had been manufactured.

MR. GLADSTONE RETIRES.—In the meantime the Government found that Mr. Gladstone, in the name of economy, was vigorously opposing even Liberal Navy estimates. His colleagues decided that the time had come for his retirement. So, in a last speech denouncing the House of Lords, he left the House of Commons, where he had made his maiden effort sixty-one years earlier. Over that long period he had obtained a marvellous mastery over the rank and file of his Party. It is said that his colleagues always referred to him as 'Mr.' Gladstone. In the House of Commons his ascendency over the Liberal Members was described in these words by Joseph Chamberlain: 'The Prime Minister calls "Black," and they say, "It is good"; the Prime Minister calls "White," and they say, "It is better." It is always the voice of a god. Never since the days of Herod has there been such slavish adulation.' The words may have been bitter, but underlying them there was a real element of truth. In the country an active politician either worshipped Mr Gladstone, or hated him with an equal degree of feeling.

He died in 1898, and, after lying in state in Westminster Hall, was buried in Westminster Abbey (May 28th, 1898).

THE ROSEBERY GOVERNMENT.—Mr. Gladstone's successor was Lord Rosebery. For some time past the Liberal Party had been a nest of argument and intrigue on the question of its new leader. Deputations had visited the Chief Whip urging that at least he should not be a Peer. The rival claimants were Sir William Harcourt and Lord Rosebery. For the latter there was no great enthusiasm, and in places actual hostility. The former, in the words of his son, had 'a facility for making enemies' and a lack of 'prudence and patience.'

The Queen, however, sent for Lord Rosebery, but by that time it was clear that he was the choice of the Liberal Cabinet, in spite of the fact that he was a Peer. In the opinion, however, of the Radical wing of the Party, Harcourt was the 'victim of a dirty trick,' and his friends indicated John Morley, who had promised to support him and had later gone over to Lord Rosebery, as 'the man who had deprived' him of 'the first place.'

Harcourt was made Leader of the House of Commons, but the combination was not a success. Rosebery and Harcourt were too different in

temperament to be colleagues, and after a few months they consulted—through a third person.

The new Ministry made an inauspicious beginning. Lord Rosebery presented the Home Rulers with the very unpalatable truth that, before Home Rule could be granted, 'England, as the predominant member of the partnership of the three kingdoms, will have to be convinced of its justice.'

Some of his Party in the House of Commons retaliated by defeating the Government by two votes on an amendment to the Address in favour of the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords. The Liberal leaders had decided, however, that the General Election should be fought on this question. Their policy was to take the items of the Newcastle Programme, or as many as possible, get them through the House of Commons, and present them to the House of Lords, hoping for their rejection. It was the policy of 'filling the cup.' Then, when it was full and overflowing, an outraged Government was to appeal to an indignant people for a mandate to deal with those who opposed the popular will.

Thus it was planned, but political arrangements often go astray. The Liberal Party could not agree whether to 'mend or end' the Upper Chamber. The task of getting Bills through the House of Commons was too heavy a one for a dispirited

Government. When the Election came the worst that could be said of the House of Lords was that it had rejected the Home Rule Bill and the Irish Evicted Tenants Bill. But that was all. Out of its desire to make a case, the Liberal Government had dropped the Employers' Liability Bill rather than allow the House of Lords to insert a 'contracting out' clause; but it had, with much ill-feeling, accepted the House of Lords amendments to the Parish Councils Bill. Of the remaining items of the Newcastle Programme the House of Lords was not asked to give its opinion; the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, a Local Option Bill and other measures did not emerge from the House of Commons.

The Government's one legislative achievement of outstanding importance was the Harcourt Budget of 1894. Faced with what in those days was a big deficit, Harcourt raised the increased revenue by extending to land and settled personalty the probate duty hitherto charged on unsettled personalty only; and by not taxing land in accordance with the successor's life interest, as hitherto, but on its capital value. Nothing was done, however, to realise the ideal of the Free Breakfast-Table, which figured so prominently in the Newcastle Programme. Harcourt vigorously denied that his proposals would be a 'death-blow' to

country houses and estates. He protested that prudent possessors and prudent successors would still be able to keep their estates together, though he had a serious critic in the Duke of Devonshire, who took proper exception to his reference to 'the magnificent fortune of Chatsworth.' There was much irony in the fact that the Harcourt duties fell with full severity a few years later upon the Harcourt estates at Nuneham, which changed hands twice within six months when they came to Sir William Harcourt himself.

Discussions arose in the Cabinet on foreign policy, especially in regard to an extension of our responsibilities in East Africa, Harcourt, who was always a 'Little Englander,' taking a strong line against the Prime Minister.

But the days of the Government were inevitably drawing to an end. It was failing to retain the confidence of its supporters. Its majorities on divisions were not often more than 20. At times they fell to seven or eight. Even Mr. Gladstone withdrew his 'pair' in favour of the Government.

The end came in an unexpected way. On June 20th, 1895, the War Office estimates were under discussion. The Opposition moved to reduce the vote on the ground that the reserve of cordite was insufficient. The Government Whips, attaching

no more than ordinary importance to the discussion, took no more than ordinary precautions to secure a majority. 'Thank heaven,' said Harcourt, 'there is one night on which we need not fear a crisis.' The debate went on. 'I suppose they will have their usual majority,' said Mr. Balfour to Chamberlain. A division was taken. In a small House the votes for the Government were 125, against 132.

The Secretary for War, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, called it a 'blackguard business.' It was really no more than a legitimate parliamentary attack. It need not have involved the resignation of the Government. But, torn with internal dissension, and seeing no chance of making good with so small a majority, Ministers could not discover any advantage in going on.

So came to an end the short-lived Government of Lord Rosebery. In the following year he resigned the leadership of the Liberal Party, preferring, as he explained some years later, to plough his furrow alone.

The result of the General Election was a clear verdict that the Liberal Party had lost the confidence of the country.[1]

[1] Conservatives, 341; Liberal Unionists, 70; Liberals, 177; Irish Nationalists, 82.

CHAPTER II

TEN YEARS OF UNIONIST RULE

LORD SALISBURY'S third Administration differed from his previous Governments inasmuch as the Unionist alliance was consummated, and Liberal Unionists were joined with Conservatives in the Ministerial circle. The two most prominent were Joseph Chamberlain and the Duke of Devonshire.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN.—Chamberlain's association with the Conservatives was heartily disliked by the Liberal Party. He had entered Parliament as a Radical in 1876, after a municipal career in Birmingham which had proved him to be a practical and energetic administrator. Reluctantly he had been included in the Liberal Government of 1880 by Mr. Gladstone, who regarded his views, with some alarm, as being too advanced. To his Liberal colleagues he was at times a cause of embarrassment. They deplored his 'absence of recognition of the fact that he was not an individual, but a member of a body.' At Birmingham and elsewhere in 1885 he outlined proposals which were known as

the 'unauthorised programme.' The Whigs in the Liberal Party could hardly suppress their disapproval of his proposals. The Conservatives did not endeavour to do so. He spoke of 'those who toil not, neither do they spin.' The Conservatives retorted with a reference to his cultivation of orchids, on 'which he devoted annually sums of money sufficient to clothe, house and feed comfortably a score of his poor neighbours.' Lord Salisbury wished him a broken head for his pains, if he led the threatened procession from Birmingham to London in defence of the Franchise Bill: and he retorted that if the noble Marquess would lead the opposing force his head would be broken in good company. 'What ransom,' he asked, 'will property pay for the security which it enjoys?' Lord Iddesleigh retorted by comparing him to 'Jack Cade'—'an ill-used and much misunderstood gentleman,' said Chamberlain in reply.

Unlike Lord Hartington, who was opposed to Home Rule, Chamberlain was a Home Ruler before Mr. Gladstone; and he had submitted a plan of devolution or Home-Rule-all-round to the Cabinet in 1885. He had been closely associated with Parnell and other Irish Nationalists, and had bitterly opposed 'coercion.'

For what reason, then, did he leave Mr. Gladstone,

and by so doing alter, perhaps, the whole course of history?

The truth was that in those days the phrase 'Home Rule' was loosely used to mean an independent legislature for Ireland or a plan of devolution described as Home-Rule-all-round. While by Home Rule Mr. Gladstone meant special treatment for Ireland, giving her an independent legislature, Chamberlain contemplated the establishment of a series of subordinate councils for the historic parts of the United Kingdom, treating all alike, and specially favouring none. Between the two plans there was a vast difference of principle. Mr. Gladstone's reason for Home Rule was the satisfaction of Irish grievances first and foremost. Chamberlain's reason was the better government of the United Kingdom by devolution, Ireland being included not as the result of special treatment, but only as the result of the application of a general policy.

To Home Rule, as Mr. Gladstone proposed it, Chamberlain was always entirely opposed. His acceptance of office in the Liberal Government of 1886 was provisional, as is shown by his letter to the Prime Minister. In it, indeed, he reiterated his opposition to the Gladstonian form of Home Rule. Chamberlain no sooner knew that the plan of local government had been rejected, and that Mr.

Gladstone had become convinced of the 'necessity for conceding a separate Legislative Assembly for Ireland, with full powers to deal with all Irish affairs,' than he resigned.

Henceforward he was to be the leading opponent in the Home Rule fight. That he was fighting against former colleagues angered them exceedingly. That he had been the 'rising hope' of many of them made them more bitter. His action was attributed to self-interest, and 'Judas' and 'traitor' were two of the epithets hurled at him. Yet no man had made a greater sacrifice of career. At the time of his disagreement with Mr. Gladstone he had no expectation of coalescing with the Conservatives. Indeed, he looked for Liberal reunion when the existing causes of dispute had disappeared. The Liberal Party lost him for ever because Mr. Gladstone insisted upon nailing the Home Rule flag to the Liberal mast. Chamberlain, if he had sacrificed principles, would in all probability have become leader of the Liberal Party, and in those days Mr. Gladstone's retirement in a few years was anticipated. As it was, Chamberlain left his former colleagues, knowing that no friendly camp would welcome him. He spent ten long years in the wilderness, hated by the Liberals and suspected by a considerable number of Conservatives.

After the General Election of 1895 there was no reason why he should continue to stand aloof. With the Liberal Party there was no possibility of composing differences. With the Conservative leaders, in spite of natural divergencies of opinion on some subjects, there was an increasing co-operation. Consequently no one was really surprised when he and three colleagues were included in the new Government.[1] Chamberlain, rather to general astonishment, became Colonial Secretary, not regarded hitherto as a post of the first order, but he was to make it so.

Social Legislation.—The years of Unionist power from 1895 to 1905 almost naturally fall into two periods, divided by Lord Salisbury's retirement in 1902. At home the first period was a time of progressive domestic legislation. Useful measures became law—a number as the result of Chamberlain's influence—such as the Metropolitan Boroughs Act, 1898, the Coal Mines Act, 1896, the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901—'the most comprehensive measure of the kind yet placed on the Statute Book,' was a Labour leader's comment; the Irish Local Government Act, 1898; the Irish Agriculture and

[1] Chamberlain, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Lansdowne and Lord James of Hereford. A number of Liberal Unionists were also appointed to subordinate offices.

Technical Instruction Act, 1899; the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act, 1899; the Friendly Societies Act, 1896; and the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897. Every year to 1898 the Unionist Budgets had surpluses of revenue over expenditure.

Now and again slight differences showed themselves between the two wings of the Unionist Party. On education questions they were not at one, the Church schools naturally possessing a much greater meaning for the Conservatives than for the Liberal Unionists, who were mainly Nonconformist in religion. The Workmen's Compensation Bill, which was believed to be largely due to Chamberlain's inspiration, was opposed in certain Conservative quarters. But Lord Salisbury's was a wise influence on the one hand; and on the other the Duke of Devonshire kept the peace. It was not until Lord Salisbury withdrew that the Government began to show signs of disintegration.

Jameson Raid.—As Colonial Secretary Chamberlain soon found himself faced with difficulties. On December 30th, 1895, Dr. Jameson had entered the Transvaal at the head of 500 armed men to go to the relief of the party in Johannesburg which was demanding a share of political power from the Boers. He was defeated and surrendered. He and

his associates were brought to England. They were tried at Bow Street, and imprisoned.

The episode gave the Liberals an excuse for attacking Chamberlain. It was alleged that he knew all about the Raid; that he would have connived at it, had it been successful. It was said that he had had to whitewash Rhodes in the House of Commons in the face of the Committee's Report under threat of exposure of damaging letters and telegrams. These, when published, proved, however, to be innocuous. An inquiry was demanded, and was granted. In Liberal eyes, whatever the official terms of reference, it was, in reality, the Colonial Secretary who was on his trial. It would not be untrue to say that Harcourt led for the Liberal Party. He was its examiner-in-chief, having sharp duels with Rhodes, who was one of the witnesses. Chamberlain denied 'that he had the slightest suspicion of anything of the nature of a hostile armed invasion of the Transvaal,' and it was accepted by Harcourt that he had no previous knowledge of the Raid. Feelings at the time were strained. It was even suggested that Harcourt had been 'nobbled'—a charge which overlooked the fact that other Liberal members of the Committee, who had agreed to the report, must have all succumbed to the same pressure; but there were those

who remained convinced, though proof was lacking, that Chamberlain, while clear of complicity in the Raid, was aware of preparations for a rising in Johannesburg.

To-day the details are dimmed, and the event maintains its memory because it was the occasion for the German Emperor's famous telegram to President Kruger:

> "I sincerely congratulate you that, without making any appeal for the help of friendly Powers, you have succeeded with your own people, by your own strength, in repulsing the armed bands which invaded your country as disturbers of the peace, in re-establishing order and in defending the independence of your country against attacks from without."

The British answer to the telegram was the despatch of a flying squadron to South Africa: and only Lord Salisbury's calmness avoided serious consequences.

The Jameson Raid had seriously impaired any influence which might have induced Kruger to extend to the *Uitlanders* some measure of participation in the government of the country. So far from taking advantage of the situation to secure the future

of the Transvaal by wise concessions, Kruger demanded from the British South African Company compensation to the amount of £677,938 3*s.* 3*d.* for actual damage, and a further £1,000,000 for 'moral and intellectual damage'—a priceless phrase, which for a long time maintained its vogue.

South African War.—In the following years the position of British subjects in the Transvaal went from bad to worse. In May 1899 Chamberlain, writing to Milner, the High Commissioner, suggested a conference with Kruger in the hope of arriving at an agreement. The two met at Bloemfontein without result. Communications continued on both sides, but, as Chamberlain said, 'The sands were running down in the glass.' Finally the Boer Government delivered an ultimatum (October 9th, 1899) which the Unionist Government would not discuss.

War followed. Liberal leaders agreed that the Boers were in the wrong; but they disagreed among themselves as to the necessity of resorting to arms. The country, however, clearly approved of the Government policy; for Lord Salisbury in September 1900, when the Boer forces had been defeated in the field, dissolved Parliament and was again returned at 'the Khaki Election' with a

slightly increased majority—a striking vote of confidence when it is remembered that the Government, having been in office for over five years, had to face the swing of public opinion on other questions.

There followed two more years of guerilla warfare before peace was signed at Pretoria (May 1902). It was an annoying, irritating conclusion, long drawn out; a 'sort of warfare,' said the Lord Chancellor (Lord Halsbury).

The Government had the support of Lord Rosebery, Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey. Other Liberals—among them Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new Liberal leader, Sir William Harcourt and John Morley—resolutely opposed the conduct of the war. They brought familiar charges against the Government. They denounced Ministers for not efficiently waging a war which they declared in the same breath ought never to have occurred. They declared that the force in South Africa when the war broke out was insufficient; that too many infantry and too few mounted men were sent out; that the Boer strength was underestimated; that the supply of remounts was insufficient; and that the hospital accommodation was bad. During the later stages of the conflict the Government's policy of clearing the country of the enemy was denounced as being conducted by

'methods of barbarism.' The concentration camps were picturesquely, if not accurately, described as 'smoking hecatombs of slaughtered babes.' 'We had raised,' said Mr. Lloyd George, 'a barrier of dead children's bodies between the British and the Boer races in South Africa.'

The section of the Liberal Party responsible for these charges was led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. It was rebuked for its attitude by its fellow Liberals who assembled under the flag of Liberal Imperialism—Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane! At that time it looked as if the Liberal Party was again to drift into permanently hostile camps; but the Unionist leaders were to raise issues which gave it the opportunity of appearing again as a united Party. The cleavage was, however, as later events showed, too deep-seated to be entirely forgotten or forgiven.

Foreign Policy.—Elsewhere abroad than in South Africa the policy of the Unionist Government, under Lord Salisbury's direction, was successful, though it was not without its periods of anxiety.

In the Soudan a forward campaign was undertaken in 1896. The province of Dongola was reoccupied, and in September 1898 a memorial service to General Gordon was held on the spot where he fell in Khartoum.

At the same time, Major Marchand, a French officer, had pushed across Africa from the west, and was at Fashoda on the Upper Nile. Kitchener went to meet him from Khartoum, and for some time the two faced each other in that far-distant place, whilst the diplomats in London and Paris decided the outcome of what the preceding Liberal Government had declared would be regarded as an 'unfriendly act'—the occupation of the Upper Nile by a foreign Power. Feeling ran high in both countries; and a diplomatic contest of wits and argument ensued. Ultimately the French Government came to the conclusion that the occupation of Fashoda was of no sort of value to France, and resolved that it should cease (November 4th, 1898). It was a warless victory for Great Britain; but in less wise and skilful hands than Lord Salisbury's it might easily have been an occasion for hostilities.

At that time the belief still prevailed that France was the enemy and that Germany, in spite of hostile actions, was the friend. A year later Chamberlain was to hint at an alliance between Great Britain, the United States and Germany. Nothing came of the suggestion; and though Lord Salisbury had already experienced the German Emperor's rudeness in an interview at Cowes in August 1895, and had excused himself from a

second interview on the ground that he was detained by a conference with the Queen, he regarded Germany as our natural friend. With France he could not bring himself to work as did his successor, Lord Lansdowne.

In the New World also Lord Salisbury had his difficulties. A dispute with Venezuela in 1895 brought Great Britain as near to war as the complication with France over Fashoda was to do in 1898. The subject was the boundary between that country and British Guiana. The dispute had gone on for many years; but, a presidential election approaching in the United States, President Cleveland decided to obtain some popularity by engaging in the discussion, and a long despatch was sent invoking the Monroe doctrine.[1] Lord Salisbury saw no reason to hasten his reply. When he acted he sent an ultimatum to Venezuela, a despatch to

[1] The Holy Alliance, in 1823 having intervened to help the Royalists in Spain to power, proposed to use force to restore the revolted colonies in South America. The U.S.A. President—Monroe—in a message to Congress made the following pronouncement: 'We owe it to candour, and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and these (European) Powers, to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European Power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have on great consideration and on just principles acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European Power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States.'

the United States controverting its argument for the application of the Monroe doctrine and a second accepting in part the proposal of arbitration. The President was full of fight; but the country, on second thoughts, thought better of it. Lord Salisbury tactfully made matters easy. Arbitration was accepted, and the findings almost coincided with the original proposals.

At a later date Lord Salisbury returned the United States good for evil by declining to be associated with the suggestion that a number of Powers should intervene in its conflict with Spain.

The Empire Outlook.—Under the administration of Chamberlain the Empire was regarded from a new angle of vision. Sir William Harcourt chaffingly declared that Chamberlain entertained 'the conviction that he is Captain Cook and General Wolfe rolled into one, and that he discovered Australia and that he stormed the Heights of Quebec.' But, as Chamberlain said, 'his watchword was the development of our Imperial estates,' and he successfully devoted himself to the establishment of sympathetic relations with our possessions overseas.

In 1897, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee, and in 1902, Colonial Conferences were held in

London. Imperial Penny Post was inaugurated on Christmas Day, 1898. Canada, in 1897, began the policy of Empire Preference on British goods. The States of Australia became the federated Australian Commonwealth in 1900. Canada, Australia and New Zealand sent contingents to take part in the South African War.

GOVERNMENT IN DIFFICULTY.—Coincident with the retirement of Lord Salisbury and the succession of Mr. Balfour to be Prime Minister and leader of the Unionist Party (July 1902), the real troubles of the Government began, and the hope of the Liberals dawned.

The first difficulty was the Education Bill. The fundamentals of our educational machine had not been touched since 1870, when the Liberal Government had established the School Board system. There were, consequently, side by side, the undenominational Board Schools, supported by parliamentary grants and the capacious pockets of the ratepayers, and the denominational schools—mainly Church of England establishments—supported by parliamentary grants and voluntary subscriptions. The standard of education was rising, the cost was increasing, and all kinds of supplementary forms of education were being added

to the main system—secondary, higher and technical education developments. With difficulty the denominational schools maintained their position. Temporary Acts had been passed in 1897 to meet their case and that of necessitous School Boards, which were also feeling the burden of increased costs. Tentative measures had been introduced dealing with secondary education, but had not been proceeded with. On one occasion, it is said that the Duke of Devonshire, then responsible for education as Lord President of the Council, broke the news of legislative decease to his subordinate, Sir John Gorst, in these words: 'Well, Gorst, your damned Bill's dead.' Finally, an enterprising local Government auditor, Cockerton, made legislation essential by declining to sanction expenditure from the rates by a School Board on other than elementary education, and by having his decision upheld in the courts.

Educationally the Act of 1902 was a big advance, and was admitted to be by Liberals. It abolished School Boards, and made County Councils and Borough Councils the education authorities for all types of education—elementary, secondary and technical. It accompanied this change by bringing the denominational schools into the system, and by giving them the support of the rates in the

same manner as the board schools, or, as they were now known, the 'provided' schools, being 'provided' by the local education authority. At the same time the denominational or 'unprovided' schools retained the character of their religious teaching as contrasted with the 'provided' schools, where, under the provisions of the Cowper Temple clause in the Act of 1870, none other than undenominational teaching could be given.

The Bill was the signal for an outburst of religious rancour on the part of the Liberal Party, then in large part Nonconformist. All the latent antagonism against the 'parson' was aroused, and was skilfully fanned by the Liberal organisers. With the Liberal Unionist wing of the Unionist Party also the Bill was not popular. 'The political future,' Chamberlain wrote to the Duke of Devonshire, 'seems to me most gloomy. I told you that your Education Bill would destroy your own Party. It has done so. Our best friends are leaving us by scores and hundreds, and they will not come back.'

The Bill became an Act, but the controversy increased in bitterness. Under Liberal auspices a 'passive resistance' movement was inaugurated by those who declined to pay what they calculated would be that portion of the education rate allocated to the maintenance of denominational schools in

their area. Illogically, they continued to pay taxes, though some portion of their taxation went, as it had done for years, towards the support of these schools. In certain districts in Wales, where political Nonconformity was strong, there was a refusal to administer the Act ; and a special measure had to be passed in 1904 to deal with the situation thus created.

Tariff Reform.—So little was the situation to the liking of the Colonial Secretary that he took no part in the debate on the Education Bill, and in November 1902 he departed to South Africa, not returning until the spring of 1903.

The sequel to this visit was a further means of uniting the Liberal and breaking up the Unionist Party.

In his position as Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain's mind had been turning to Empire trade. So far back as 1896 he had spoken of its value. Canada had already shown proof of her practical interest by giving preferential treatment to British goods ; and more than one Colonial Conference had passed resolutions on the subject. Thus the seeds were already sown, and they only awaited the application of a fertilising agent to bring them into flower.

The agent was to be Chamberlain. In 1902, in

consequence of the cost of the South African War and the necessity of increasing taxation, the Government had reverted to a former tax (removed in 1869) of a shilling duty on imported grain and flour. It had been welcomed then by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian Prime Minister, as a means of adjusting our fiscal system so as to give a preference to Empire production ; and this view had not been rejected by the Colonial Secretary, who, in the following year, definitely proposed to the Cabinet that a tariff preference should be given to Empire produce by adjusting the duty, which was then regarded as a permanent new source of revenue (November 1902).

No binding decision was reached ; but there is no doubt that Chamberlain had reason to believe that the Cabinet as a whole was in favour of his plan. The Budget of 1903 was framed by Ritchie, Chancellor of the Exchequer in place of Hicks-Beach, who had retired with Lord Salisbury. He succeeded in convincing the Government that there were arguments against the continuance of the duty, which far exceeded the principle of Empire Preference. The principal reason for discontinuing the duty appears to have been reports of its unpopularity in the constituencies, where the Liberal Party were already raising the cry of the ' dear loaf.' The slogan—' A tax on the food of the people '—was one

which the Unionist Party managers shrank from facing. Ritchie, therefore, proposed the repeal of the duty ; and the Cabinet—or a majority—agreed.

Thus passed a chance of making a beginning with Empire Preference. Chamberlain was angry at the changed course of events. In a speech at Birmingham on May 15th, 1903, he deplored the rejection of the Canadian offer. He recognised that it involved a departure from our fiscal system, but he advocated the change as being necessary in the interests of Empire trade.

On the same day the Prime Minister (Mr. Balfour) defended the repeal of the duty. It was, he said, 'a tax which revives old controversies, which is attached to no new policy believed of the people at large, and which, being thus the battledore and shuttlecock of the two contending Parties, is singularly ill-fitted to be of that permanent armoury which every Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . must have at his command.'

The seeming differences of opinion delighted the Liberal leaders. 'This reckless criminal escapade of Joe's,' Campbell-Bannerman wrote, 'is the great event of our time. It is playing Old Harry with all Party relations.' There were rumours, to use Mr. Asquith's words, that 'A. J. B. was going to chuck Joe and his schemes!'

A debate was raised in the House of Commons by the Liberals. Chamberlain took the opportunity further to outline his scheme. Had he the choice he would seek a mandate at the next General Election to summon a special Colonial Conference in order to negotiate terms of preference with the Colonies. An effective preference, he boldly said, must fall upon food ; but such revenue as was raised in this way should be allocated to the benefit of the working classes for old-age pensions. The suggestion that old-age pensions should be paid by food taxes was an unfortunate one. It was thoroughly exploited by the Liberal Party. This aspect of the question and the cry of the ' little loaf ' were given such publicity as served almost to obliterate the big principles which Chamberlain had in view.

While the proposals served to unite the Liberals, they had a disintegrating effect upon the Unionist Party. The Conservative wing was to divide into three groups : those who followed Chamberlain in what was colloquially known as the ' whole hog ' programme ; those who followed Mr. Balfour in the somewhat indefinite proposals which he ' adumbrated ' ; and those who would have no change of fiscal policy at all.

The divisions cut across the traditional grouping of the Party. So typical a Tory of the old school as

Chaplin delightedly followed his former antagonist Chamberlain. The less enthusiastic followed Mr. Balfour. The 'Free Trade' Unionists, though few in number, were not lacking in ability. Some determined not to leave the Party, others, such as Mr. Winston Churchill, found in due course a refuge with the Liberals.

The Liberal Unionist wing was not less divided. Generally the Whig element, led by the Duke of Devonshire, were against Chamberlain; but those traditionally associated with him were still among the most enthusiastic of his lieutenants.

The Chamberlain policy was not the official Government policy as enunciated by the Prime Minister, who counselled delay rather than precipitancy which would mean a dissolution. The question could not remain open and academic, as the Prime Minister would have wished; for Chamberlain held that ideas demanded action. He was incapable of appreciating the Balfourian view of not 'professing a settled conviction where no settled conviction exists.'

The Cabinet met in September (1903) to discuss the position. Two Ministers,[1] being convinced supporters of the existing fiscal system, were, it was described, 'dismissed.' They were joined on the

[1] Ritchie and Lord Balfour of Burleigh.

following day by a third.[1] The Duke of Devonshire on the evening of the same day (September 15th) also resigned, but withdrew his resignation on hearing for the first time that Mr. Chamberlain, in a letter of September 9th, had resigned with the object of 'devoting myself to the work of explaining and popularising those principles of Imperial union which my experience has convinced me are essential to our future welfare and prosperity.' The three Ministers afterwards complained bitterly that they had been kept in ignorance of Chamberlain's resignation. But it is difficult to see how they, being convinced Free Traders, could have continued to serve in a Government the head of which, if not an advocate then of the whole Chamberlain policy, was at least occupying a 'half-way house' towards it. Moreover, the three had not indicated that their sole objection to Tariff Reform would be removed if the proposal to tax food were not attempted.

The Duke of Devonshire was very unhappy in his position. On the ground of disagreement with the terms of Mr. Balfour's speech in October to the National Union of Conservative Associations at Sheffield—though it contained no more than Mr. Balfour had already enunciated—he decided to separate himself from the Government. Thus the

[1] Lord George Hamilton.

disintegration of the Unionist Party was completed.

The campaign was carried to the constituencies by the protagonists of all sides. The Tariff Reform League was formed for the special purpose of advancing the full policy of Protection and Imperial Preference, including the food taxes.

The Conservative Central Office, traditionally the personal office of the Chief Whip as the lieutenant of the leader of the Party, maintained a position aloof from the Chamberlain programme, and advocated the policy pronounced by Mr. Balfour in his 'Economic Notes on Insular Free Trade' and subsequent speeches. It differed from the Chamberlain policy inasmuch as it did not favour a full Protective tariff. It advocated the use of a tariff for retaliatory purposes against those countries which placed tariffs on our exports and required the threat of retaliation to reduce them. In connection with Imperial Preference it required first the approval of a General Election to call a conference, and then the approval of a second General Election before effect could be given to the Preference decisions of that conference.

The chaos in the Unionist Party was the opportunity for the Liberals. The Liberal leaders, sinking personal antagonism, used every occasion to embarrass the Government by raising the fiscal question

in Parliament, and made a descent upon the constituencies in support of Free Trade and against the 'food taxes.' A 'Free Trade Union' was hastily formed as a counter-blast to the Tariff Reform League. The Liberal campaign was skilfully conducted. The 'hungry forties' were recalled, and it was hinted that empty bellies would again be the lot of the people if Chamberlain succeeded.

IRELAND.—The Government's difficulties were not confined to the education and fiscal questions. Ireland, once more, was making its contribution to a British Government's burdens. On this occasion, however, the Home Rulers were not to be the instruments. The trouble was domestic. The Chief Secretary, Wyndham, had succeeded in passing a Land Act in 1903 with the assent of all Parties in Ireland. It proposed a complete transfer of land from the landlord to the tenant, and made the sale attractive by a cash bonus and cash payments, in place of stock which had formed the basis of sale in all previous measures.

The Act was given a general welcome. The outlook seemed to be set fair; but, as always in Irish politics, the brightest sky preceded a storm. The permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Anthony MacDonnell, a distinguished Indian official transferred

to Ireland, was given a freer hand than was usual to a Civil Servant, and was regarded, said Wyndham, 'rather as a colleague than an Under-Secretary.' Being a Home Ruler, he was naturally a suspect to Irish Unionists. His administrative actions were challenged, not always justly; but the main criticism was directed against the 'greater freedom of action and the greater opportunities for initiative' which were given him. Irish Unionists felt that a Unionist Government had in some degree abrogated its duty of governing Ireland in accordance with Unionist ideas. Their dissatisfaction came to a head with the publication of a scheme of devolution for Ireland by a body entitled the Irish Reform Association (August 1904). The Under-Secretary had had previous knowledge of the proposals, and indeed had shared with Lord Dunraven—the leading spirit of the association—in their preparation. His action was taken with the knowledge and consent of the Lord-Lieutenant (Lord Dudley) and the Chief Secretary; but the Cabinet later expressed the view that it was 'indefensible.' He did not resign; neither did the Lord-Lieutenant. The Chief Secretary was the scapegoat, and was succeeded by Walter Long, whose views on the Irish question were not in doubt even by Irish Unionists. Ireland had proved the grave of another political career.

CHINESE 'SLAVERY.'—Much more serious from an electoral point of view was the decision of the Government to allow the recruitment of Chinese labour for the Rand mines in South Africa. The Liberals seized the opportunity. It was 'slavery,' said some; 'hardly distinguishable from slavery,' said the more conscientious; while the less scrupulous roundly declared that the introduction of the Chinese to South Africa was only the preliminary to their importation to this country, under similar conditions, to take the bread out of the mouth of the working man. A Liberal cartoonist inflamed popular sentiment by depicting the wraiths of two British soldiers watching a file of manacled Chinamen, with the legend: 'Is this what 20,000 British soldiers died for?'[1] And Mr. Lloyd George worked himself into a frenzy over 'the Union Jack waving over the slave compounds of South Africa.'

In vain Unionist speakers protested that the Chinese were not to do white men's work; that there were Liberal precedents for the regulations under which the Chinese were introduced; that they would be well housed and well treated; that the compound wherein they lived was not a prison-yard. The Liberal Party contented itself with piously exclaiming

[1] The original edition proved on second thoughts too much a misrepresentation even for Liberal politicians, for in a revised edition of the cartoon the manacles were removed

that it would never, never be a party to slavery in any form under the British flag. Argument and fact stood no chance against a natural antipathy. 'Chinese slavery' became as useful, if not a more useful, election cry to Liberals than the 'dear loaf.'

Although not strictly in its place here, the sequel may be recorded. When the victory had been won the Liberal Government, through Mr. Winston Churchill, its new Under-Secretary for the Colonies, explained that it was a 'terminological inexactitude' to describe the conditions, under which the Chinese worked, as 'slavery.' The Prime Minister's election pledge to 'stop forthwith the recruitment and embarkation of Chinese coolies' was conveniently ignored. Existing licences for importation were allowed to stand, and the Chinese then on the Rand were allowed to continue their 'slavery' until the new Transvaal Constitution was established, when it would be left to the responsible Government in the Transvaal to continue or end the experiment.

The cry of 'slavery' had served its purpose. It cannot be said that the Liberal Party added to its reputation for honest dealing with the electorate by its attitude on the question; and by shuffling out of its responsibilities in leaving the ultimate decision to the Transvaal, and by agreeing in 1907 to allow the ordinance to continue for two

years more, the Liberals set their seal upon hypocrisy. At the same time they agreed to an indentured labour ordinance for the New Hebrides, which recalled the Chinese ordinance to which they took exception, although the latter was much less stringent in the conditions under which the individual labourer had to work.

But, as the Liberal Government was then entrenched for many years by a huge majority, the protests fell upon unproductive ground.

The General Election.—For two years Mr. Balfour successfully maintained the existence of his Government in the face of the difficulties caused by the Tariff Reform campaign and of an intensifying Liberal attack. But the day of reckoning came. He resigned in December 1905. The Liberals formed a Government ; and so complete was the reaction from ten years of Unionist rule that the Unionist Party lost 215 seats, and the Liberals were returned with a majority of eighty-eight over all other Parties—Conservatives, Liberal Unionists, Labour and Irish Home Rulers.

CHAPTER III

LIBERALISM TRIUMPHANT

THE Liberal mandate could be variously interpreted. Tariff Reformers denied that the electorate had really rejected the change which they advocated in the fiscal policy of the country. Certainly they had not been given the chance of a clear-cut contest between Tariff Reform and Free Trade. Chinese 'slavery' had played its part. So had opposition to the Education Act of 1902 and the Licensing Act of 1904. In addition, Trade Unionists were in fear that their movement would be broken unless the 'Taff Vale' and other decisions were reversed by legislation, and they anticipated getting a more satisfactory settlement from the Liberal than from the Unionist Party. Home Rule for Ireland had been definitely ruled out, although a vague promise was made of some step that would be an instalment of the 'larger policy' of complete self-government. In the opinion of the Liberal Ministers the first pledge to be satisfied was the promise to reverse the Unionist Education Act.

C. B.'s 'Obstinacy.'—Mr. Balfour had resigned before the General Election, afraid, his opponents said, to go to the country as a Government; but really anticipating that the Liberals might not fight with such unity as a Government as they would as an opposition which had not yet entered the Promised Land. We know to-day that there was a good deal of substance in this argument. In 1898 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had been appointed leader of the Liberal Party. He had stuck to his post when the Liberal future was black, and he had endured the criticisms and attacks of fellow Liberals such as Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane, with Lord Rosebery leaving at intervals his 'tabernacle,' or his 'lonely furrow,' to make the position more difficult.

On Mr. Balfour's resignation Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was naturally invited to form a Government. He accepted; but it was with the knowledge that Sir Edward Grey had delivered an ultimatum. Unless Sir Henry accepted a peerage, and transferred his leadership to the House of Lords, he could not count upon Sir Edward Grey accepting office or taking any part in the Government.

Mr. Asquith was more accommodating. He agreed to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, but he, too, urged the Liberal leader to agree to be relegated

to the House of Lords. It was suggested that Sir Edward Grey's support might be obtained by making Mr. Haldane Lord Chancellor. This Campbell-Bannerman declined to consider ; and he refused to be shunted to the House of Lords at the instigation of the Liberal Imperial group.

In the end he won. He remained as Prime Minister in the Commons, and Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane withdrew their objections and agreed to join the Cabinet—the former as Foreign Secretary and the latter as Secretary of State for War. But, as events were to show, there was within the Cabinet still a group of Liberals who acted together without the full knowledge of their colleagues.

Education Controversy.—The new Government, after the election had confirmed its position, began its work on its sessional programme. 'Enough of this fooling,' said the Prime Minister in a Private Member's debate on the fiscal question ; 'let us get to business.'

The first item was to allow political Nonconformity to have its revenge on the Church. An Education Bill was quickly introduced. Its connection with education was slight ; but its determination to destroy the Church Schools was pronounced. In principle it refused them either

assistance from parliamentary grants or rates unless they agreed to become 'provided' schools. It permitted such schools as were transferred to give religious instruction outside school hours on two days a week by other than the regular teachers. In urban districts these restrictions were slightly relaxed, but the principle remained.

The attempt to make the system of undenominational religious instruction universal in reality in all public elementary schools aroused the sternest opposition not only of the Church of England, but of the Roman Catholic community. With the latter the Government did not desire to quarrel, and it tried, but in vain, to make concessions which would satisfy the Roman Catholics, but would not extend to the Church of England schools.

The Bill, when it left the House of Commons, was in consequence, an extraordinary hotch-potch of illogical and contradictory clauses which pleased no one. The House of Lords did not reject the Bill, but amended it to make religious instruction available to children whose parents desired it. Such instruction was to be voluntary, in school hours, and teachers were not to be prohibited from giving it.

The Government refused to consider the changes which the Upper Chamber had made. The Bill

was dropped, and there followed the usual fulminations against the House of Lords : but a well-known Liberal publicist (Mr. C. F. G. Masterman) summed up the situation by saying that : ' It was a deplorable result of the first session of the new Radical Parliament that some 2,500,000 Roman Catholics and an indefinite number of Liberal Churchmen should be saying, either openly or in their hearts, " Thank God for the existence of the House of Lords ! " '

There was, in fact, outside political Nonconformity, no real resentment against the House of Lords. The desire to get at the ' parson ' was, however, still unsatisfied in that circle. In 1907 Mr. McKenna was allowed to try his hand at legislation. His Bill was not proceeded with by the Government. In 1908, having promised Liberal supporters that he would not produce an olive branch, but a sword, he was given a second chance. The Bill was withdrawn after the Second Reading, and a new Minister of Education (Mr. Runciman) was permitted to make an attempt ; but his effort was as abortive as the previous measures.

Thus failed political Nonconformity's intention to be revenged upon the Church. Its Bills perished because they were not founded upon principles of

equality and justice, but were based upon hatred and spite.

The controversy ceased when the new Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd George) turned his disappointed followers to a fresh distraction—the landlords. How artificial the agitation was can be gathered from the fact that from the time the politicians decided to leave the religious controversy alone there was no religious controversy in the schools.

The Trade Unions.—The first session of the Liberal Parliament was occupied also by a measure of very different purport, the course of which showed that the Government had by no means settled down.

A series of judicial decisions between 1899 and 1901—the 'Taff Vale' case being the best known—had seriously perturbed Trade Union leaders. The effect had been to make peaceful picketing illegal and Trade Union funds liable for damages for inducing men to break their contracts during a strike.

The Unionist Government had referred the whole question to a Royal Commission, and had thereby incurred the wrath of the Trade Union leaders, who demanded instant legislation.

The Liberal Government's Bill authorised peaceful

picketing, but left it possible to bring an action for damages against the union if the act complained of had been authorised. The Government spokesman talked loudly of ' creating a privilege for the proletariat ' if it was agreed to meet the Trade Unionist demand for absolute immunity for their funds. No sooner, however, did the Trade Union leaders show their opposition to any proposals less than complete protection than the Government capitulated, although Ministers had, but a short time before, boasted that they would not ' budge one inch.'

The Labour Party, then in its infancy as an independent body, continued to give its support to the Liberal Government, Liberal votes having in the majority of cases assisted the election of their candidates : but a Liberal Trade Unionist, Osborne, a railway servant of Walthamstow, in 1908 declined to pay the political levy which the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had been imposing upon all its members, whatever their political view, for Labour Party expenses. He sought by law to restrain his union from making levies for political purposes. The case went to the House of Lords which declared against compulsory levies and that political action did not come within the meaning of the Trade Union Acts. It also expressed the

opinion that to require Members of Parliament to give a pledge was *contra bonos mores*.

As the Trade Unions by reason of this judgment could not compulsorily levy their members for political purposes, the Liberal Government came to the assistance of the Labour Party in 1911 by providing for the payment of Members of Parliament.

Two years later (1913), by passing into law the Trade Union Act, it created the machine which was to be largely the instrument of its own destruction at later General Elections. This measure gave Trade Unions the right to take a ballot on the question of political action, and, if a majority of votes cast were in favour, to raise a political levy fund by means of a compulsory levy, subject to a 'contracting out' clause for dissentients.

Thus was created the Socialist Party as we know it to-day.

Mr. Lloyd George.—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's health gave way in the spring of 1908. He resigned in April, and died in the same month. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Mr. Asquith, who, in turn, was succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Mr. Lloyd George, until that time President of the Board of Trade.

In those days Mr. Lloyd George was a typical product of Nonconformist Liberalism. He had been taught to hate the 'parson' and the 'squire,' and he did it. Born in Manchester, brought up in a Welsh village, articled to a solicitor in a small Welsh town, Mr. Lloyd George's early outlook was limited by his environment. In 1890 Carnarvon Boroughs returned him to Parliament at the age of twenty-seven by a majority of eighteen votes. It is easy to visualise him in those days. He was given to making Radical speeches, and to accusing his opponents of being guided by self-interest rather than by principle. They were fools, of course, but it was seldom that they were not knaves as well. His diversion was to seek, and to his satisfaction to find, some pecuniary advantage in the policy of his opponents. At one time it was Harry Chaplin, who was to benefit by £700 a year as the result of the Agricultural Rates Act; at another it was Chamberlain, whose brother was Chairman of Kynoch's, a firm engaged in munitions during the South African War. 'Judas,' said Mr. Lloyd George, 'only finished himself, but "this man" had finished thousands. Mr. Chamberlain prevented peace. In South Africa people were murdering each other. . . . Meanwhile, Messrs. Kynoch & Co. had declared a ten per cent. bonus.' These reckless

personal accusations were recalled with some effect at a later date.

His Parliamentary career followed the usual course of one who aimed to get on in politics. He defied the Speaker, and was suspended. He refused to obey his Party Whips. He took every opportunity of attacking the Church on the lines which formed the stock-in-trade of less reputable Liberal orators of Victorian times; but he was still a provincial figure.

The South African War gave Mr. Lloyd George a national standing. His hasty retreat from the Birmingham Town Hall in the disguise of a policeman did more to make his name known to the public than a hundred speeches in Parliament or in the remote recesses of the Welsh valleys. Bishop-baiting during the education controversy—a sport in which he indulged with great zest—raised him to the pinnacle of popularity with political Non-conformity.

In the Campbell-Bannerman Government he was given the choice of being Postmaster-General or President of the Board of Trade. He chose the latter. On the reconstruction of the Government, when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman resigned, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer, after, it is said, Mr. Haldane had refused the position.

THE 'PEOPLE'S' BUDGET.—The appointment was to endow the Government with some energy and life. The Old-Age Pensions Act, which it fell to Mr. Lloyd George to pass, was only a 'beginning' of greater benefits to come, as soon as he had found 'someone's hen-roost to rob.' He did not seek far. His old enemies, the landlords, came within his vision; and they were designed to be the victims of his policy.

He required four and a half hours to introduce his Budget—and then left much of it unexplained. So far as it was concerned with raising the increased revenue necessary to meet the deficit, it lacked novelty. He fell back upon the usual devices of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who has to face higher expenditure. He increased the death duties, the income tax, licence duties, spirit duties and tobacco duties. They provided his revenue.

He added pungency to his schemes by proposing three taxes on land—an increment tax, a reversion duty and an undeveloped land duty. Never was there such a hullabaloo over a few thousand pounds in taxation. In his most optimistic mood Mr. Lloyd George did not estimate the first year's yield to exceed £325,000; and his final figure was £250,000. Actually, to the time of their repeal in 1920, the land taxes had yielded £1,300,000, and had cost

£5,000,000 to collect. Their net yield in future years, had they been continued, was put at £200,000.

Their author, then Prime Minister, agreed that they could go. He could well afford to do so. They had served their purpose within the first year of their appearance. Mr. Lloyd George wanted a case against the House of Lords, and that institution very kindly made it for him. Deliberately he provoked them to action. They were the landowners; they were the enemy; the 'dukes and earls and barons had stolen the commons from the people'; 'the great landlords' were to be given 'a turn on the treadmill' to 'see how they liked it.'

They didn't like it. He succeeded in angering them, as he desired. 'Damning the consequences,' they refused to pass his Budget—or, rather, the Finance Bill which gave it legislative effect.

'We have got them at last,' he cried. The House of Lords had 'mangled' the Education Bill, rejected the Scottish Land Values Bill, the Scottish Smallholders Bill and the Licensing Bill; but these wickednesses were as nothing to their latest crime. The Budget was 'the people's Budget,' full of 'rare and refreshing fruit,' which the Peers had snatched 'from the parched lips of the multitude.'

There was a General Election. The country showed its appreciation of the hollowness of the

Liberal case by reducing the Liberal representation in Parliament by nearly 100 to 275. Unionists were 273. Less optimistic politicians would not have regarded this as a victory for Liberalism. But the Liberal Government could count on the steady support of a sturdy band of allies in the Labour and Irish Home Rule Parties, numbering 40 and 82 respectively.

The Budget was passed without more ado. Then the Coalition determined to smash 'the order of things the Peers represent.'

THE PARLIAMENT ACT.—The death of King Edward VII in May 1910 postponed the clash of hostilities. A conference of leaders of the two Parties[1] was in being for some months. It failed to come to an agreement; and Mr. Asquith declared 'a state of war.' A Parliament Bill was introduced, but was not pressed to a conclusion. The decision was to be left to the electorate. The verdict, not unnaturally, did not greatly vary in December from the opinion which had been expressed in January of the same year.[2]

[1] On the one side, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, the Earl of Crewe, Liberal leader in the House of Lords, and Mr. Birrell. On the other Mr. Balfour, the Marquess of Lansdowne, Earl Cawdor and Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

[2] Liberals, 272; Unionists, 272; Labour, 42; Irish Nationalists, 84.

The Coalition now played the next act in the drama. In February 1911 the Parliament Bill was introduced. In August it was law. The House of Lords passed it under the threat that the Government, if necessary, would advise, and the King would assent to, the creation of a sufficient number of Peers to prevent the defeat of the Bill.

In this way the long Liberal campaign against the 'veto' of the House of Lords was brought to a conclusion. For effective purposes Parliament was a single chamber House. In future the House of Lords could hold up a Bill certified by the Speaker as a Money Bill for a month, and no longer. It could reject any other Bill, but such Bill, if passed by the House of Commons in three sessions in not less than two years, would become law over the heads of the House of Lords.

The Parliament Act was not, however, the full measure of the Liberal Government's policy on the question. The Government regarded itself as 'bound in honour' to proceed with the thorny problem of reforming the Second Chamber. Such a pledge indeed was put on record in the preamble to the Parliament Act itself; and Mr. Asquith expressed the view that its fulfilment 'brooked no delay.' Notwithstanding these brave words, nothing was done to give effect to the pledge during

the lifetime of the Liberal Government. The reason was, of course, a simple one. The Coalition had destroyed the ' veto ' of the House of Lords with a practical purpose in view. It now wanted to get through the legislation to the passage of which the House of Lords had been the obstacle.

The first claimant was the Irish Home Rule Party ; and, as it formed a sufficiently numerous wing of the Coalition for its support to be necessary to the life of the Government, it had to be satisfied.

The Third Home Rule Bill.—At the General Election of 1906 the Liberal Party avoided giving pledges of Home Rule to the Irish Nationalists. An ' instalment ' was contemptuously offered. It materialised in 1907, when Mr. Birrell brought in the Irish Council Bill—a measure which Ireland with perfect unanimity refused to touch. It died without a friend to mourn its loss ; and the Liberal Party wiped Home Rule off its slate.

Not until Mr. Asquith knew from the results during the Election of December 1910—the polls were not then, as now, held all on one day, but a fortnight could elapse between the first and last pollings—that he would be dependent for his majority on the vote of Irish Nationalist M.P.'s did he pledge himself to bring in a Home Rule Bill.

It was introduced in April 1912, and followed the usual lines. The Irish were to have representation in the Westminster Parliament after Home Rule. They were to speak and vote on British questions; but their number was reduced to forty-two. The Bill was pushed through the House of Commons by the use of a drastic time-table.

It was sent to the House of Lords, and, not unnaturally, was rejected by the Peers. It was again sent up in 1913 under the Parliament Act; and for the third time in 1914.

Though its Parliamentary passage had been smoothed, the Parliament Act could not suppress the feeling in the country. The Ulster Unionists were as much, if not more, opposed to Home Rule in 1912 than they had been in 1886 and 1893. In September of the year before, the Ulster Unionists had signed a Covenant to resist Home Rule and not to recognise the authority of a Home Rule Parliament. Under the leadership of Sir Edward Carson their plans developed. In due course a scheme for the establishment of a Provisional Government was drawn up, to be put into force in the event of the Home Rule Bill coming into operation. The movement to form Volunteers to resist Home Rule was officially recognised in 1913, and Lieutenant-General Sir George Richardson—a retired Indian

officer—was appointed to organise and command the force.

At first Liberals affected disdain. The 'military play-acting of King Carson's Army' with its 'wooden guns' afforded them a splendid opportunity of leavening dull speeches with humorous sallies. But when they found that the Volunteers were arming, and were taking themselves seriously, Liberals began to take the situation seriously too.

The Unionist Party, composed in part of a generation which had had no personal experience of previous Home Rule campaigns, was at first inclined to dismiss the question as inconvenient and as a 'bogey.' A continuous campaign in Great Britain aroused again a growing interest; and the full strength of the Unionist Party was brought into operation on the Ulster Unionist side by the visit of Mr. Bonar Law, the leader of the party, to Belfast at Easter, 1912—two days before the introduction of the Home Rule Bill into the House of Commons.

From derision the Liberal Party proceeded to panic. Instead of saying that the movement was 'not to be taken too seriously,' it was now demanding the prosecution of the Ulster leaders. The Government, however, wisely decided not to put them in the dock. It determined on the subtler process of trying to put them in the wrong. Schemes and

suggestions for settlement were everywhere 'in the air.' Ulster was to be treated with every consideration. No Unionist in Northern Ireland would have the slightest reason to oppose Home Rule. Such safeguards there were to be as would remove every substantial objection; but the one plan that might really have met the difficulty—the exclusion of Ulster—was not proposed by the Government.

The whole object of this display of moderation was, of course, to put Ulster out of court with the people of Great Britain. Otherwise, the Government would have refrained from putting forward suggestions that were only illusory and unacceptable.

In the spring of 1914 the mood of the Government changed. There were to be no more peace offerings. To Mr. Churchill there were 'worse things than bloodshed even on an extended scale.' The hour had struck. 'Let us go forward together,' he said, 'and put these grave matters to the test.' Three days previously the Irish Home Rule leaders had breakfasted with Mr. Lloyd George. On the same day, Mr. Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, issued orders for a squadron of battleships, cruisers and destroyers to move from the coast of Spain to Lamlash in the Isle of Arran, opposite the Ulster coast. A military governor of Belfast was appointed; and military control of the police was

secured. A sub-committee of the Cabinet was appointed to deal with Ulster affairs. Colonel Seely, the Secretary for War, instructed the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland to 'take special precautions' to protect the military depôts in Ulster which were 'insufficiently guarded'; and he was ordered by telegram to proceed to London. The troops in Ulster were strengthened, especially at strategic points. Those in Belfast were removed to the outskirts of the city. Ships were ordered to proceed to Belfast Lough to support the Army 'with guns and searchlights' if necessary.

These 'precautionary' measures were clearly the preliminaries of an offensive against the Ulster Unionists. 'Officers actually domiciled in Ulster' were to be allowed to 'disappear' before the operations commenced—a concession which implied more than a mere movement of troops. Army officers, apart from the above, who were not prepared to carry out orders, were to be dismissed the Service. Whether they were to state their position at once, or await some order which they were unable to obey, was not made clear. To some the question was put bluntly, and half an hour was given them to give an answer that would affect their whole career; but this was alleged to be a 'misunderstanding' of instructions, though it was fully thought by those

officers of whom the question was asked that they were offered the alternative of being dismissed at once or fighting against Ulster.

The number resigning was large. It included Brigadier-General Gough and 57 officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade. The former was summoned to the War Office, where he told the Secretary for War that he was prepared to obey all lawful orders. The Adjutant-General drew up a statement of what the Secretary for War had said. The draft was altered by the Cabinet, Colonel Seely not being present, having been at Buckingham Palace. Returning to Downing Street, he, with the assistance of Lord Morley, added two paragraphs to the written statement to bring it into line with his verbal statement. The ' peccant paragraphs ' were repudiated by the Government, and as they had appeared over the initials of the Secretary for War, of Sir John French, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and of Sir J. S. Ewart, the Adjutant-General, the three resigned. Mr. Asquith himself became Secretary for War.

The full story was dragged out of the Ministers only by the most persistent cross-examination. They prevaricated and wriggled, asserted that ' all the material documents ' were published in the first White Paper, and then, under pressure, issued

a second White Paper containing many more documents of the highest importance. The climax was the revision by the Lord Chancellor (Lord Haldane) of his speech in the House of Lords. Asserting that no orders would be issued for the coercion of Ulster, he qualified the language of the official record by the insertion of the word 'immediate' before the phrase 'coercion of Ulster.'

It was the exact truth. The plot had failed. Liberals, unashamed at being found out in an attempt to provoke Ulster Unionists into breaking the peace, began a campaign of 'the Army *versus* the People.' 'Who shall rule,' they asked, 'the People, through their elected representatives, or a few aristocratic Army officers?' The campaign was not successful. Liberal leaders damped it down, and even the fiercest supporters could not produce a single instance of an order being disobeyed. Besides, there was evidence that the feeling, so far from being confined to 'a few aristocratic Army officers,' was shared by all ranks.

The indignation of the Liberal Party was soon turned in a new channel. On the night of April 24th, 1914, a large number of rifles and a quantity of ammunition were successfully landed at Larne and elsewhere for the Ulster Volunteers. Action

was demanded, but the Government decided not to take proceedings, and at a later date it went to the extreme of even facilitating the import of rifles for the Home Rule Volunteers.

The military activities of Ministers were, however, soon to be turned into a wider field ; and there was no second campaign against Ulster. But it may be remarked that many Liberals who were foremost in advocating the use of force against Ulster were the most reluctant to support the use of the same weapon against Germany.

In the shadow of the coming conflict Mr. Asquith showed some sign of relenting. Counties of Ulster which balloted for exclusion would be excluded —for six years. The House of Lords, when this amending Bill was before it, made the exclusion complete. A conference at Buckingham Palace failed to come to an agreement, and the outbreak of war stopped further attempts to remove the deadlock. Although pledged to suspend controversial legislation, Mr. Asquith forced the Home Rule Bill, with Ulster included, on the Statute Book by means of the Parliament Act. At the same time, by another Act, he suspended its operation.

By the decree of fate the Home Rule Act never came into force. For all their obedience to the Liberal Party, the Irish Nationalists had no

effective gain to carry to their supporters. Their position, already difficult, was made worse by Mr. Asquith's action. He gave them the shadow, but denied them the substance. The sequel is told in that section devoted to politics during the war.

Other Legislation.—The constitutional crisis was not allowed to absorb public attention. The Budget having passed, Mr. Lloyd George brought in the National Insurance Bill (1911). It established that system with which we are all now so familiar—Health Insurance—and made a beginning with Unemployment Insurance for selected industries. It was received with expressions of good will, and it seemed that it would avoid Party controversy. Mr. Lloyd George determined otherwise. He was soon conducting the measure in the usual spirit of Party legislation. Gag and guillotine were applied to get the Bill through, but two years later (1913) an amending Bill of considerable scope had to be passed.

Mr. Lloyd George stood outside the Home Rule controversy. He was, to the general surprise, not the leading participator in the campaign in support of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. It was introduced in 1912, and followed the course of measures under the Parliament Act. Its operation

was suspended on the outbreak of war, in the same way as the Home Rule Act. It occasioned a few typical 'Church *versus* Chapel' speeches from Mr. Lloyd George, who rebuked the Peers, 'with hands dripping with the fat of sacrilege,' for charging the Liberals with 'the robbery of God.' But it was a half-hearted performance, for his mind was set on the task of 'freeing the land from the chains of feudalism, and the people from the anxieties, the worries and the terrors that their children may be crying for bread in this land of plenty.'

THE MARCONI SPECULATIONS.—But the campaign was suspended while Mr. Lloyd George was himself answering a charge. His speeches, as already mentioned, abounded with reckless accusations of graft against political opponents and of making use of their position to enrich themselves personally. He was now to go through the furnace of criticism. Rumours that Ministers had been engaged in speculation in Marconi shares, at a time when the Marconi Contract was before Parliament and the Government were indignantly denied. (October 11th, 1912). A French paper, *Le Matin*, however, quite incorrectly mentioned Sir Rufus Isaacs and another Minister as having purchased shares in the English Marconi Company, of which Mr. Godfrey

Isaacs—brother to Sir Rufus—was managing-director, and as having sold them at a substantial profit when the successful conclusion of the contract could be foreseen.

An action for libel followed. Sir Rufus Isaacs, then Attorney-General, explained that he had bought 10,000 shares in the *American* Marconi Company, and had sold 1,000 to the Chief Liberal Whip and to Mr. Lloyd George. It subsequently appeared that Mr. Lloyd George purchased a further 1,500 shares.

The Select Committee then considering the contract called Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. Lloyd George to give evidence. Briefly the charge was that the three Ministers had engaged in a Stock Exchange speculation; that in this transaction they had acted on the advice of a contractor to the Government; that they acted on information that was not available to the public; that they bought indirectly from the Government contractor; and that they had invested in a company which was making a contract with the Government of which they were members.

The speculation, the committee declared, was free from all taint of corruption. It was purely an error of judgment, a transaction entered into without thought of the misconstruction and misconception

which arose; but what was discouraging and disconcerting to Liberals was the fact that the full knowledge of the transaction was as difficult to extract as the most stubborn molar. The National Liberal Club, however, marked its opinion of the business by giving a luncheon to two of the Ministers concerned: and Mr. Lloyd George, no longer required 'to sit silent while calumny is being hurled at our heads,' returned to the more attractive task of denouncing landowners. He drew vivid pictures of 'pheasants' pecking and destroying 'mangolds,' and hurled threats at the 'squire'—the 'god' of the villages; 'the parson—his agent; the game-keepers—his priests'; and 'the pheasants and the hares—the sacred birds and beasts of his tabernacle.'

But the response to this invective was less spontaneous than before. The country was more interested in the drama that was being played in Ireland, and even before the curtain could ring down on that performance a greater tragedy was to be staged.

Unionist Position.—In these troublous years, from 1906 to the outbreak of the war, what was the position of the Unionist Party? Mr. Balfour, its leader, had been defeated at Manchester at the General Election. He returned as Member for the

City of London at the end of February 1906. No more than a remnant of his Party had survived the contests.

The Liberal majority, flushed with victory, were contemptuous of the rights of the minority. The Unionist Party was, of course, still divided on the question of Tariff Reform. A correspondence on that subject between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, dated February 14th, 1906, and for that reason known as the Valentine Correspondence, brought about an agreed formula. Fiscal reform was, and was to remain, the first constructive work of the Unionist Party. Its objects were to secure more equal terms of competition for British trade and closer commercial union with the Colonies. In principle it was not objectionable for these ends to establish a moderate general tariff on manufactured goods and to impose a small duty on foreign corn.

On these lines the controversy proceeded; and Tariff Reform held its place in Unionist speeches. But necessarily pressure of other and more immediate controversies tended to reduce its prominence. Education, Licensing, the 'People's Budget,' the land campaign, and the controversy over the House of Lords all competed for public attention.

In July 1914 Chamberlain died, but through

illness he had been out of active politics since the summer of 1906. In November 1911 Mr. Balfour was succeeded as leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons by Mr. Bonar Law. Since 1906 there had been two General Elections, in both of which Tariff Reform had played some part, although the principal issues had been the ' People's Budget ' in the first Election and the House of Lords in the second. To these issues there had been added, as time went on, Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment. The leaders of the Unionist Party were anticipating in the near future another trial of strength with the Liberals. The Party forces in the House of Commons balanced. A little more to the Unionists and the country might be saved from a further period of Liberal rule. Who can blame them that, believing the Party to be seriously handicapped by the full Tariff Reform proposals, which included a tax on foreign wheat and gave the Liberals the present of the ' little loaf ' slogan, the Unionist leaders decided to limit the preference proposals by eliminating food duties? ' If we are returned to power,' said Mr. Bonar Law (Edinburgh, January 1913), ' we shall impose no new duties on the food of the people.' Later in the year he repeated his pledge: ' We shall not impose any new duties on any articles of food.'

But there was to be a moderate tariff on foreign manufactured goods, and a preference to the Empire on all duties imposed in the United Kingdom.

Thus the food taxes—the bugbear of many Unionists—disappeared. Thoroughgoing Protectionists and supporters of the 'whole hog' policy of Empire Preference disliked the change; but future events were to show that Tariff Reform, within the limits then laid down, was not a wholly impracticable policy.

The outbreak of the war found the Unionist Party in thorough fighting order; but it was not to measure its strength with the Liberal Party for eight years.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR

Liberal Foreign Policy.—With the succession of Lord Lansdowne to the Foreign Office in 1900, and the retirement of Lord Salisbury in 1902, there was a vital change in our foreign policy. Lord Salisbury, living in Victorian atmosphere, regarded Germany as a natural friend of Great Britain on account of race and many close ties of kinship. He was of opinion also that the Latin races had had their day and were on the path of degeneracy. But Germany herself, showing lack of good faith in many matters, helped to dispel this view; and at the same time Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, not, like so many French Ministers, a bird of passage, determined not to leave office without 'a good *entente* with England.'

The path to understanding was not easy. We had jostled France in many parts of the world. In Egypt, in Newfoundland over a fishing dispute more than a century old, in Morocco, in West Africa, in the New Hebrides, in Madagascar and in

Siam, there were outstanding questions between France and ourselves. They had produced acute controversy in the past; and they could easily again give rise to ill-feeling.

Before there could be an *entente* they would have to be settled. They were settled in April 1904 by a comprehensive agreement. It gave the Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, 'intense satisfaction,' and he promised that the Liberal Party would continue the foreign policy of the Unionist Government. In this expression of opinion he was supported by Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Haldane.

The new friendship was to be immediately tested by Germany. In March 1905 the people of Tangier witnessed the arrival of the German Imperial yacht, *Hohenzollern,* with the Emperor on board. He took the opportunity of expressing the opinion that the Emperor of Morocco was a free and independent sovereign, that the French 'reforms' were undesirable and that Germany had interests to protect in Morocco.

Germany demanded a conference, and got her way. France lost Delcassé, who resigned; but Germany failed to break the *entente.* Lord Lansdowne supported France, and warned Germany that Great Britain could not remain indifferent if she

made war. It is denied that he promised France military assistance.

Sir Edward Grey, who succeeded Lord Lansdowne before the crisis was settled, made no change of attitude. He was asked whether the Liberal Government would give France military assistance in the event of war. He made no promise; but, realising that this was no isolated episode, he agreed, after consultation with the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Haldane, that British and French military and naval experts should have 'conversations.' Then, in the event of another crisis, and Great Britain agreeing to give France armed assistance, the way for co-operation would have been prepared.

The secret was kept from the Cabinet for some years.[1] Other Ministers, when it came to their knowledge, found that they had been talking of the reduction of armaments, of the Liberal Government forming a league of peace, at a time when their colleagues were so seriously impressed with the possible contingency of war that definite co-operation between British and French naval and military experts had been prepared.

One can suppose that there were excellent reasons

[1] It was apparently disclosed to the remaining Cabinet Ministers in August 1911, on the occasion of the Agadir crisis.

for not telling the whole body of Liberal Ministers at the time ; but those who knew, had to be silent, and those who were ignorant, were vocal. It was the beginning of the strangely double part the Liberal Party was to play for some years, and, by so doing, was seriously to mislead the country as to the German danger.

Speaking 'with knowledge and deep sense of responsibility,' the Colonial Secretary (Mr. L. V. Harcourt) said in 1908 that Anglo-German relations 'had at no period during the last ten or fifteen years been on a firmer and more friendly footing than they are to-day.' 'I am not one of those,' said the Financial Secretary to the War Office (Mr. F. D. Acland), a year later, 'who believe that we are going to fight Germany or that Germany is going to fight us.'

In July 1911 Germany created the Agadir crisis, sending the *Panther* to that port, with instructions not to leave until affairs in Morocco had resumed their tranquil aspect. The Liberal Government took the line that had been taken in 1906, telling Germany, if one account is to be believed, that it would stand beside France, if she insisted upon claiming the French Congo in return for a free hand in Morocco, and upon taking Agadir as a naval base.

The incident was the occasion of a speech by Mr.

Lloyd George at the Mansion House, in which he pointed out that the price of peace could be made too intolerably humiliating for us to endure. Coming from a Minister popularly presumed to be associated with the pro-German element in Parliament and in the country, and devoted only to strife in domestic affairs, the speech attracted the greatest attention. War was avoided. It was not France but Germany which gave way, though with very bad grace.

Liberal Party's Entente with Germany.—Notwithstanding these demonstrations, the Liberal Party generally still hugged the belief that Germany was the friend. The pro-German element succeeded in removing Mr. McKenna—who was regarded as spending too much on armaments—from the Admiralty. He was replaced by Mr. Churchill, who was believed to be more susceptible to the opinions of the rank and file. The Liberal caucus loudly demanded naval reductions, and actually despatched a telegram of warm and grateful thanks to the German Emperor for his attitude during the Agadir crisis! No Liberal Minister was so courageous as to tell it the truth, that Germany meant to humiliate France or to wage war, and that her plans miscarried; or that Mr. Churchill, so far from being sent to the Admiralty to be an instrument of naval reductions,

was given that post, to use his own words, ' with the express duty laid upon him by the Prime Minister to put the Fleet in a state of instant and constant readiness for war, in case we were attacked by Germany.'

The conspiracy of silence on the part of Liberal Ministers involved a heavy future responsibility. The Liberal Party, being uninstructed, persisted in opposing naval expenditure. Even a Minister—not in the Cabinet, however—could deplore ' the monstrous increase of the sum spent on naval armaments.' But Mr. Haldane came away from Berlin in February 1912 ' feeling uneasy.' Germany was piling up armaments. He found large increases contemplated of which the Liberal Government had no knowledge.

Its answer was quietly to increase our Navy, and to concentrate its strength in northern seas. Expenditure was more than doubled. When Mr. Churchill's suggestion of a ' naval holiday ' was contemptuously answered by a new German Naval Law the Government put forward a large supplementary estimate.

Liberals regarded these increases as deplorable and lamentable. The Chairman of the Party caucus endeavoured to raise the branch associations in revolt. The intention of the Liberal Government to present estimates in 1914 ' substantially greater

than the enormous sum originally voted' in 1913 raised the lamentation anew. 'It is a devil's business,' said the Chairman: and Mr. Asquith, who addressed the Liberal delegates, shared their 'disquietude,' he said; but he refrained from explaining why a Government, committed to a small Navy in principle, had embarked upon a policy of expansion. Though he would not explain, neither would he give way. A private deputation of Liberal M.P.'s who went to him to demand Mr. Churchill's dismissal (December 1913), found him unresponsive to their request. The Cabinet, he said, were as responsible as the First Lord for naval expenditure.

But nothing was done to check the Liberal mischief-makers. Every piece of propaganda machinery was put into operation. The National Liberal Club and the National Liberal Federation were active. Liberal associations were circularised. A Liberal demonstration was held in the Queen's Hall in favour of the reduction of armaments. Liberal M.P.'s voted against naval estimates. A Press campaign was run against Mr. Churchill. Mr. Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Churchill's colleague and principal opponent on the subject, on New Year's Day, 1914, expressed the opinion that our relations with Germany were infinitely more friendly than they had been for

years, and that that moment was the most favourable for twenty years for overhauling our expenditure in armaments.

By next New Year's Day he was revealed as a hopeless prophet; and one likes to think that he, perhaps, was glad that Mr. Churchill, and not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been successful in the controversy on our naval expansion.

Had it known all that was taking place, the Liberal rank and file would have been in even a more pronounced state of hysteria. The conversations sanctioned in 1906 between British and French naval and military experts had borne fruit. By the time of the Agadir crisis in 1911 matters had advanced so far that it was only necessary to press 'a visible button' and within thirteen days six British Divisions and a Cavalry Division would have been in their appointed places on the Belgian frontier.

Whilst the Liberal rank and file were stretching out their hand of friendship to be grasped by Germans the Liberal Cabinet—from this time all Liberal Cabinet Ministers were acquainted with the trend of events—approved in November 1912 of a definite understanding in writing that if either the British or French Government 'had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third

Power, or something that threatened a general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common.'

Thus, as regards both naval and military defence, matters had advanced far in the direction of action against Germany. But, notwithstanding all that they had done, and all that they knew Germany was doing, even Ministers insisted upon making declarations of friendship with Germany, and of censuring those who spoke otherwise.

Our relations with Germany were those of amity and good will, said the Prime Minister in the summer of 1912. 'A great and friendly nation,' said Sir John Simon in the same year. 'There is a far greater prospect of peace than ever there was before,' said Mr. Haldane in the beginning of the year in which the war broke out. 'Deplorable, pernicious and dangerous,' said Mr. Runciman of Lord Roberts's opinion that war was 'inevitable'; and he allied himself, he added, with Germany in 'resenting' the suggestion.

It was, indeed, the fact that during the Balkan crisis in 1912–13 Germany and Great Britain worked together. 'Europe,' said the German Chancellor,

' will know how to thank Sir Edward Grey. Germany shares in these thanks.' His tongue was in his cheek : but Liberals received these expressions with enthusiasm. They were regarded as justifying the claim that Germany was the true friend of Great Britain. But later reflection led Sir Edward Grey's apologist to express the opinion that, after all, he had been duped—' The mischief-makers allowed Sir Edward Grey to keep the peace so long as it suited them.' Germany was only gaining time. ' Germany strikes,' said Lord Roberts, ' when Germany's hour has struck.' Liberals denounced him at the time for saying it (October 1912) ; but it was true. As Mr. Lloyd George afterwards admitted, Germany was a false friend who had been preparing for war for years.

It stands to the credit of the Liberal publicists that, although Liberals before the war violently protested against the opinion that a conflict with Germany was unavoidable, they nearly, if not quite, succeeded in convincing the country that the Liberal Government had to face the inevitable in August 1914.

THE OUTBREAK.—Had a Unionist Government been in office in July and August 1914 no imagination is needed to supply what Liberals would have said; but,

a Liberal Government being in power, the critics were for the most part reduced to an uncomfortable silence.

On June 28th, 1914, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the successor to the throne of his uncle, Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, was murdered, with his wife, at Sarajevo in Bosnia. One attempt had already failed. The second was successful. Had this failed, others were to be tried. The responsibility was put upon the Serbian Government, which protested, but nevertheless was submissive to the main demands of the Austrian ultimatum (July 25).

So far it was an Austro-Serbian dispute—one of many in the crooked history of the Balkans. Germany, however, backed Austria, and Russia backed her fellow Slavs—the Serbians. So France, Russia's ally, was involved.

What would Great Britain do? Sir Edward Grey warned the German Ambassador, 'in quite a friendly and private way,' that, if Germany and France became involved in the dispute, he did not wish the Ambassador 'to be misled by the friendly tone of our conversations into thinking that we should stand aside.' But, with good reason, not being sure either of his colleagues in the Government or of his Party, he could not say either to the German Ambassador or to the French and Russian

Ambassadors that we should intervene. He would not promise to be neutral if Germany respected the neutrality of Holland and took nothing from France but her colonies. But, even when the French Ambassador recalled the correspondence of November 1912, Sir Edward Grey could give no pledge. An impassioned appeal from the President of the French Republic to the King was also unproductive of a definite answer (August 1st, 1914).

Sir Edward Grey would give no promise, because he could not be sure that such promise would be fulfilled. Never was a Minister in a greater difficulty. His Cabinet colleagues knew of the correspondence of November 1912, but his Party was entirely ignorant, and, as we have seen, had been for some years busily engaged in creating and maintaining pro-German sentiments. It is not difficult to appreciate the shock to the feelings of the leading spirits of the National Liberal Federation at the announcement that a Liberal Government had declared that Germany was the enemy and must be fought then and now!

Germany obligingly made the case for the Liberal Ministers who were against intervention. This she did by invading Belgium; but, while it provided a reason to many waverers, the Liberal Government had before then, perhaps without appreciating the

full consequences, committed the country to war with Germany.

British naval reserves were mobilised on Sunday, August 2nd; and the Cabinet authorised Sir Edward Grey to inform the French Ambassador that 'if the German Fleet came into the Channel, or through the North Sea, to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping, the British Fleet would give all the support in her power.'

It was not a promise of entire co-operation with France, but it was a conditional declaration of war against Germany. On the morning of the same day Mr. Asquith had received from Mr. Bonar Law, on behalf of the Unionist Party, a written promise of 'our unhesitating support to the Government in any means they may consider necessary' in support of France and Russia.

On the evening of that Sunday German intentions respecting Belgium were clear. The pro-German element in the Cabinet was silenced. Those who had opposed our intervention, with two exceptions,[1] remained, not perhaps converted, but at any rate convinced which way public opinion had gone, and determined to swim with the current and not against it. John Morley, who could not change, gives a picture of some of his colleagues on that day:

[1] John Morley and John Burns.

'On August 2nd, a Sunday, I think, we went to lunch at Beauchamp's—Lloyd George, Simon and myself. Simon said to me before we went upstairs, "I think I've got Ll. G.; he is with us." The next day, half an hour before the Cabinet met, I said to Ll. G., "I'm going." He replied, "Don't be in a hurry." Half an hour later he said, "I stay. It's Belgium." Simon resigned with tears streaming down his face at having to leave Asquith. The same evening Burns came to me and said, "Simon's going to stay—he has withdrawn his resignation."'

On August 3rd Sir Edward Grey made his statement in the House of Commons. It revealed to the country our obligation of honour to support France. By midnight of August 4th, Germany having made no reply to our request for assurances that she would respect the neutrality of Belgium, we were at war.

But it was with a Government in part half-hearted, and acquiescing not because we were right, but because Germany was wrong. If Germany had respected Belgian neutrality we could not have stayed out without losing our honour, yet, according to Mr. Lloyd George, the Liberal Government would have done so. In expressing his opinion

he overlooked the fact that we were conditionally committed from the moment Sir Edward Grey had pledged us to use our Navy against Germany if she attacked the French Channel coasts or French shipping.

Not without reason the Liberal rank and file were angered at Sir Edward Grey's revelation of our commitments—the more so as repeated assurances had been given that the country was not under any obligation, not public and known to Parliament, which compelled it to take part in any war. It was all very well for Sir Edward Grey to protest that Parliament was free to decide whether we should intervene or not. But on August 3rd there could be only one decision. The understanding was too definite, and the climax of the crisis too near, to permit of any real freedom of choice. No House of Commons, on the spur of the moment, with war impending, could accept the responsibility of rejecting a policy that had been maturing for years. It was unfair to attempt to shuffle the responsibility on to the shoulders of Parliament at the last minute.

THE FIRST COALITION.—The political history of the war has still to be written ; but its main features are well known.

In the beginning the Liberal Government carried on. It did not regard the conduct of the war as a matter in which other political Parties should be invited to share responsibility. Although equal in number to the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, the Unionist Party was not asked or encouraged to take a part in the direction of affairs. It was, however, impossible that the Liberal conception of government in war-time, with the division of Parties then existing, could continue. A growing dissatisfaction with the policy of the Government, especially in connection with the supply of munitions —some of the Ministers, it should be remembered, were but half-hearted participants in the war— led to reconstruction in May 1915. Mr. Asquith announced that steps were in contemplation which would involve the reconstruction of the Government on a broader personal and political basis. Invitations were issued to the leaders of the Unionist Party and the Labour Party, and to Mr. John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Nationalist Party, to join the Government. The last named refused; but the Unionists and Labour accepted. Thus was formed the first Coalition. While it involved the retirement of some Ministers who had failed to grasp the magnitude of the issues involved, the Government still contained a majority of Liberals.

The change marked the first appreciation by Liberal politicians of the need for a national effort.

The Ministry of Munitions was established, and the principal cause of dissatisfaction with the previous Government was thus dealt with. It was hoped that the change would also produce a more spirited and energetic policy towards aliens and 'contraband' trade. The sinking of the *Lusitania* (May 1915) had given rise to considerable criticism of the Government's alien policy. Its adoption of the principles of the Declaration of London, as the basis of the code upon which we would work in relation to enemy and neutral sea-borne trade, had also led to dissatisfaction. The question of exercising our command of the sea at this time in a manner that would not give serious offence to neutrals was doubtless a delicate one. Germany had not then developed her submarine programme of sinking at sight, nor had she warned neutrals that they engaged themselves in perfectly legitimate trade at their own risk. The United States was a vigorous defender of the rights of neutral nations; and the Government, it seemed to those who were free to criticise, dealt too timidly with cargoes obviously intended for ultimate German destination. The situation was unprecedented, for the term 'blockade' in its application to Germany had

to bear a novel meaning. Perhaps the criticism would have been less severe if the Declaration of London had not represented a policy that had aroused a bitter political controversy a few years before. In 1911 the Liberal Government had brought in the Naval Prize Bill, designed to give effect to the Declaration. That Bill was rejected by the House of Lords. The Government accepted the verdict, and did not attempt to pass the Bill under the provisions of the Parliament Act. That it should have put this rejected policy into force on the outbreak of war was responsible for a good deal of the feeling on the part of Government critics.

The principal result of the Coalition was the establishment of compulsory military service. First a National Registration Bill was passed (June 1915), as a measure, at least, for providing everyone with a card of identity. Then followed the Derby Recruiting Scheme—the final effort of voluntary enlistment—which failed to induce a sufficient number of unmarried men to enlist to justify the promise that unmarried men as a class should go before the married men.

The first Military Service Act became law in March 1916. It applied to single men between the ages of 18 and 40 in Great Britain. It excepted, or exempted by tribunal decisions or by administrative

action, large numbers of men. Its incidence was therefore unequal, not only as between men, but as regards the value of their service to the State, since it did not, as had to be done later, allocate men to the Army or to follow civil occupations in accordance with their physical fitness or skill in a particular trade.

The second Military Service Act was passed in May 1916. It extended the obligation to serve to married men ; but it continued the tribunal system and the plan of badging ' indispensables,' without regard to the man-power needs of the State as a whole. But with all its loopholes and faults, it formed for two years the basis of the supply of men to the Army ; and to its compulsory character no Party or class took exception, omitting the small body of pacifists whose natural inclination was to be against anything that a majority approved.

The first Coalition was less successful in other aspects of its war policy.

In Ireland, Sinn Fein had beaten the Irish Nationalists in the political field, after the latter had failed to get Mr. Asquith to put the Home Rule Bill into force. For years the Irish Nationalist Party had been the obedient servant of the Liberal Government ; and when it had nothing to show its supporters for its servitude they turned from it to

the more virile Sinn Fein policy. In the expectation of German assistance, arranged for by Sir Roger Casement, the Sinn Fein leaders rose in rebellion at Easter, 1916. They proclaimed a 'Provisional Government of the Irish Republic,' and seized public offices and positions of advantage in Dublin. Through a series of accidents German help did not materialise. The rebellion was put down after a week of fighting. Some of the Sinn Fein leaders were executed; others were imprisoned. The Chief Secretary (Mr. Birrell), who admitted that he had made 'an untrue estimate of the Sinn Fein movement,' resigned. A Royal Commission on the Rebellion found that he, 'as the administrative head of the Government in Ireland, was primarily responsible for the situation that was allowed to arise and the outbreak that occurred.'

In the wider field of the war our efforts went badly. There was serious criticism of the conduct of the Mesopotamian and Dardanelles campaigns. Bulgaria entered the war on the side of Germany. In the Near East our policy seemed always to go wrong. Rumania and Serbia were in defeat. In France, after the prolonged battles on the Somme, neither of the opposing forces could make progress.

The Declaration of London had been abandoned

by the Coalition Government, but the policy in relation to neutral trade was still causing dissatisfaction. By the end of 1916 neutral trade was largely controlled, and reality had been given to the 'blockade' of Germany. This was shown by her declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917—an admission that she had abandoned any thought of persuading neutrals, and was forced into trying to coerce them.

The Second Coalition.—In the fall of the year 1916, without the Government ranks and within them, there was serious dissatisfaction with the failure to make progress. There appeared to be lack of driving force in the conduct of the war and a disinclination to adopt bold and unprecedented measures.

As is frequently the case in politics, a side-issue afforded the opportunity of expressing the feelings of Parliament. In a debate in November 1916 on a minor question respecting restrictions on the sale of German properties in Nigeria to British subjects, sixty-five usual supporters of the Government voted against it. It was an unmistakable expression of opinion, which found its echo in the Ministry itself. The big Cabinet of over twenty Ministers was now regarded as too unwieldy a body to come

to quick decisions. Something more approximating to a dictatorship was needed. Proposals to this effect were made to Mr. Asquith by Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Lloyd George. They were rejected by the Prime Minister, who first determined to reconstruct the Government, but later resigned.

Mr. Bonar Law declined to form a Government. With the promise of his co-operation, Mr. Lloyd George did so. It was, said Mr. Asquith, 'a well-organised and carefully engineered conspiracy'; and it is not difficult to appreciate his feelings at the time. But the change involved too many to whom such tactics would have been abhorrent, to allow the charge to stand. No one can associate Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Balfour, Lord Curzon, Lord Robert Cecil or Mr. Austen Chamberlain as fellow-conspirators with Mr. Lloyd George in a plot to remove Mr. Asquith.

The Second Coalition Government introduced considerable changes in the traditional structure of the Cabinet system. The big Cabinet was abandoned. A small body of five met in almost permanent session. Other Ministers attended as necessary. In addition, an agenda was prepared, minutes were taken, decisions were recorded and were circulated to the Ministers and departments concerned. Thus Ministers had more time to give

to the affairs of their own offices. They were not required to attend Cabinet meetings when matters which did not affect them were under discussion. The record of decisions not only limited fluctuations of policy, but prevented uncertainty as to what was actually decided. There had been instances in the past when Ministers had gone from Cabinet meetings with different conceptions of the decisions that had been reached. Machinery, it is true, plays an important part in organisation; and the system then established did much to make the complicated and ever-expanding Government machine run without unnecessary interruption or friction. But no machine can be successful unless those in charge fully understand it.

The machine of State was now in the hands of two partners. Mr. Lloyd George was Prime Minister; Mr. Bonar Law was Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. The circumstances of the war brought together two men who had been political opponents for many years. They had given their approval to the war for quite different reasons. Mr. Bonar Law had declared his support for France before Germany had disclosed her intention of violating Belgian neutrality, Mr. Lloyd George had only been converted to the necessity of intervention by Germany's action

against Belgium. In temperament they were very different. Mr. Bonar Law had a Scottish caution. Mr. Lloyd George had all the fervour of the Celt. The latter could cast off the burden of responsibilities and sleep peacefully though a crisis threatened. The former took the cares of office in an intenser spirit. He was ever at his post, labouring, slaving, making the machine work, seeking none of the publicity which was food, meat and drink to the latter. How different they were we can recognise to-day. Mr. Bonar Law lies in Westminster Abbey, tired out long before, but carrying on uncomplainingly so long as he could serve his country. Mr. Lloyd George, bearing a not lighter load of responsibility, is still with us, with health and capacity unimpaired.

But, however different the reason which led them to support the war, both were determined to see it through—again probably on different grounds. There are those who argue that the Central Powers were about to collapse when the Second Coalition Government was formed. They overlook the efforts which our enemies made in the last two years of war, and the latent reserve strength in opponents, which has to be overcome if absolute mastery is to be obtained. How often do we see, even in a sports contest, one side failing to keep its dominance

because it under-rates the staying-power of its opponents. There were, in the last two years of war, periods more difficult than any which had occurred earlier; but, as each crisis was overcome, so ultimate victory was more certain.

The first effort of the Second Coalition was to bring about the full realisation of the understanding that the war was not between Governments and fighting forces, but was a conflict between nations—one in which the civil population had to play its part as well as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Ministers. In the early part of the war there had been a slogan, 'Business as usual: leave it to Kitchener.' Though that opinion had passed, the idea had not been wholly created that the successful prosecution of the war was everybody's business.

The task of the Government was to organise the productive and man-power resources of the nation. War can be lost on battlefields or at home. To keep up the spirit of the nation is no less a responsibility than to win battles. A civil population, faced with starvation or led to believe that victory was impossible, could lose a war which the soldiers, properly supported, could have won. Germans will confess to-day that the sufferings of the civil population had much to do with destroying the *morale* of the Army; and they will admit, too,

that our propaganda behind the lines in no small degree destroyed the will to win in German soldiers and civilians.

We had to face these difficulties also. Food shortage led to the compulsory rationing of one staple article after another. The people, the will to win the war being still strong, accepted the restrictions loyally. In time the food-supply of the whole nation was on an organised basis. One recalls to-day, since the feeling has not wholly departed, the enthusiasm with which the people responded to the request to grow as much food as possible. Somewhere in the hearts of most of us there is an itch to dig and sow; and the appeal so reacted upon that latent feeling that allotments and vegetable-patches sprang up everywhere. It had its effect upon food production, though it was only an amateur effort; but it had a greater psychological effect upon the people. Everyone who tended an allotment felt that he was doing something to help. He was occupied; and had therefore less time to brood.

In the larger sphere, shipping was controlled, imports were restricted, and farmers were encouraged to cultivate their lands to the utmost.

Thus, not only was the German submarine campaign defeated, but shipping could be devoted to

the essential tasks of conveying troops, stores, oil, coal and so on.

A not less important national scheme was the organisation of the remaining man-power of the country. Voluntary enlistment had taken all for the Army who were willing, so long as they were fit. Their greater usefulness by reason of technical skill in the making of munitions and other essential occupations had been ignored. Compulsory military service had led to almost indiscriminate 'badging,' and to exemption of fit men for varying periods. The Army competed with a hundred civil occupations for men; and there was no authority to decide what the needs of each were, and how they were to be met out of the man-power pool.

Indeed, a great deal of time and energy had to be given to getting back from the Army men who had voluntarily enlisted or had been called up under the Military Service Acts, and whose skill and knowledge were particularly required in trades connected with the supply of munitions and other war material.

To the Ministry of National Service in August 1917 was given the task of allocating the reserve man-power of the nation between the demands of the Army and the claims of munitions, food production and other essential services. A new Military

Service Act in the first weeks of 1918 resulted in a number of the younger men being withdrawn from civil occupations for service in the Army. The success of the German attack in the spring of 1918 made the demand for men even more intense. There was a further comb-out of essential occupations; the military age was raised to fifty; and increased power was given to the Ministry of National Service to call up men exempted hitherto by Tribunals. The immediate demand for reinforcements was met; and, since it was the business of the Ministry to look ahead, there was at the time of the Armistice an adequate number of men serving to meet the calls of the Army, and an organisation of man-power in essential occupations sufficient to enable the munition requirements to be satisfied.

In April 1917 the Allies obtained the intervention of the United States. That great country was exasperated by Germany's refusal to treat her representations with respect. In addition, incontrovertible evidence showed that Germany was constantly endeavouring by secret plotting to embroil her, and, by a crowning folly, persisted in maintaining the submarine campaign in the face of American protests.

To have the vast resources of America at their disposal was a big gain to the Allies; but a nation

such as the United States, even when hustling, requires a long preliminary period of organisation before her man-power and resources can be developed. In addition, the battlefields of Europe were thousands of miles distant, and every man when trained, and every ton of munitions and stores, had to be transported across seas where German submarines looked for prey.

Thus, before the power of the United States could be felt, the Allies had to bear the strain entailed by the defection of Russia.

There, pro-German sympathies had always been at work, and organisation for war was elementary. Rule by the Czar collapsed. The Kerensky Government, which followed, failed to rebuild a stable administration. The will to war disappeared. The path to peace was open. Aided by Germany, Lenin successfully established a Bolshevik Government in November 1917. He opened negotiations with Germany, and a Treaty of Peace was signed at Brest Litovsk in March 1918. The cessation of hostilities on her eastern frontier enabled Germany before the year 1917 was out to begin transferring troops to the western front. Lenin made the German offensive of March 1918 possible.

The Kerensky revolution was not without its effect on this country. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald

and other pacifists conceived the idea of organising the soldiers and workers in this country to follow Russia (June 1917). After a grand parade of their treasonable intentions the promoters of the revolution dropped their plans. Perhaps the fate of Kerensky made them afraid for their own safety.

After the blackest night, the dawn. Nothing appeared to be darker than the position on the western front when the Germans broke through in March 1918. But the decision, taken within the sound of the guns, that unity of command was essential, bore its fruit. Marshal Foch advanced his combined forces of French, British and American armies in July. The Germans were soon reduced to continuous withdrawals and to ask for a cessation of hostilities.

PEACE.—Since December 1916 there had been 'peace' offensives. In that month Germany had expressed a vague willingness to enter into peace negotiations; and President Wilson, at the same time, though in no way associated with Germany, had invited the nations then at war to state their terms of peace. In 1917 Russian revolutionists endeavoured to call a conference of Socialists of all belligerent Powers in the interests of peace. Mr. Arthur Henderson, then a Cabinet Minister, unwisely

allowed himself to be associated with the movement —an action which necessitated his resignation (August 1917). Our war aims were set out by Mr. Lloyd George in a speech to a trade union conference on January 8th, 1918. On the same day President Wilson detailed the 'Fourteen Points' of his peace programme. 'Peace by negotiation' became the slogan of our pacifists and faint-hearts. Happily it had no real effect in this country, greatly, as we may believe, to the disappointment of the Central Powers, upon whom the conviction was settling that peace when it came would be peace through victory and not by negotiation.

Bulgaria was the first to ask for an armistice (September 24th, 1918); Turkey concluded one on October 31st and Austria-Hungary on November 3rd. Germany, on October 6th, had asked President Wilson to take steps to restore peace on the lines of his 'Fourteen Points.' The President consented to propose an armistice to the Allies. The terms were settled by them on November 4th. They were signed on November 11th, 1918, at 11 a.m.

Thus the Great War ended; but its consequences were to puzzle Governments for many years to come.

Domestic Affairs.—Notwithstanding the magnitude of the issues involved, the energies of the

Government had not been wholly occupied with war affairs.

A really serious attempt had been made in 1917 to find a solution of the Irish question. In March of that year Mr. Lloyd George suggested a conference of leading Irishmen of all parties for the purpose of producing a scheme of self-government. The Convention first met in July. Its meetings continued until April 1918. It could not arrive at a unanimous decision. Ulster and the question of giving Ireland control of Customs were the outstanding difficulties.

Sinn Fein, however, about this time, raised a violent campaign against the application of the Military Service Act of 1918 to Ireland, and was discovered again to be plotting with Germany for another rebellion, which was to coincide with the Spring offensive in France.

Thus the promised Home Rule Bill, based upon such guidance as the Convention afforded, was not produced.

In the field of domestic legislation two Acts were passed, without more than a ripple of excitement, dealing with questions which in pre-war days would have aroused bitterest feelings.

Mr. Fisher's Education Act of 1918 was a real education measure, which gave effect to the progress

of ideas since the Act of 1902 had been passed. It did not interfere with the administrative structure of that Act, and it continued the responsibilities of the local education authorities which that Act had created. Moreover, it entirely avoided raising the former religious controversies.

The second Act was the Representation of the People Act, 1918. Its chief feature was the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women over thirty years of age who were occupiers of a house, or land or premises (including lodgers furnishing their own rooms), or were wives of local government electors.

The Act brought to an end, for the time being at least, the agitation for women's suffrage, which in the years before the war had found expression in burning churches and private houses, in assaulting Cabinet Ministers and interrupting their meetings. Perhaps in spite of the methods adopted by the militants, women obtained the vote. Though it was not equal suffrage upon the same terms as men, the Act enfranchised over eight million women for Parliamentary purposes.

The disqualification of women from sitting in the House of Commons and on juries and the magisterial bench was removed by other Acts as consequential extensions of the principle of equality.

CHAPTER V

THE PASSING OF LIBERALISM

IMMEDIATELY after the Armistice the Government decided to have a General Election. It was long over-due. The life of the existing Parliament should have expired in 1915, but it had prolonged its existence by special legislation. Another reason for a General Election was that it was desirable, and in accord with precedent, that the newly enfranchised men and women should have the earliest opportunity of voting.

The result was an emphatic verdict for the Government and a personal defeat for many of the Opposition leaders.[1] The ascendancy of Mr. Lloyd George appeared to be complete; but the decline was rapid, for neither at home nor abroad did he continue to possess the power and authority which had been given to him in the war.

DISILLUSION.—There were many who anticipated that peace would bring a new world 'fit for heroes

[1] Including Mr. Asquith, Sir John Simon, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Philip Snowden and Mr. Arthur Henderson.

to live in'; and, in fact, a department of the Government had been wholly engaged since 1916 in weaving the plans for the earthly Paradise for ex-Service men. Stern realities dispelled such illusions; but it was a bitter pill. The truth was that we were a heavily taxed and deeply indebted nation, whose internal machine was all awry and whose people had for some five years been living in the highest state of nervous tension.

Socialist 'Revolution' Policy.—The Socialist Party determined to impose its views on the nation in spite of the verdict of the General Election. The result of that appeal to the country it refused to accept. For some reason—apparently because, of the three political parties, it was the only one that had kept its organisation going throughout the war—it anticipated a tremendous victory. It was bitterly angry that the electors declined to recognise it as the Party which should make the Peace.

As it could not get its way through the ballot-box, it determined to use the strike-weapon for political purposes. In September 1919 it called upon the railwaymen to use their power of paralysing the community. In the next month the miners went on strike to get nationalisation. In August 1920, on the excuse that Poland ought not to be

supplied with means of fighting the Russian Bolsheviks, the Socialist Party determined to supersede Parliamentary Government by a National 'Council of Action,' with a network of subsidiary Councils throughout the country to seize the machinery of local government. The National 'Council of Action' was authorised to call a general strike, and the National Union of Railwaymen was ordered to 'bring industry to a standstill.' Mr. J. H. Thomas, its leader, properly described the Socialist plans as 'a challenge to the whole constitution of the country.' The movement petered out, leaving behind it only a knowledge of the degree to which the Socialist Party would use revolutionary forces when so minded.

The next attempt was again to be made by the miners. Their demand was, once more, nationalisation by the use of the strike-weapon. On this occasion the N.U.R. and the Transport Workers were to join in, and victory was to be absolute by completely paralysing the life of the community. But the courage of the revolutionists failed them at the last moment. Seeing in the movement all the 'germs of a bloody upheaval'—but until almost the last moment the vision was denied them—the two partners in the Triple Alliance backed out, and left the miners to carry on alone.

This they did—for three months; but 'Black Friday,' and the recriminations which followed, put an end to the attempts of the Socialist Party to gain, by the use of the strike-weapon, those political ends which the ballot-box refused them.

Rebellion in Ireland.—Irish Sinn Feiners were to wield the same weapon with greater success. Omitting Ulster Unionists, they captured all Irish constituencies at the General Election (1918) with six exceptions. They refused to take their seats in the United Kingdom Parliament, and in January 1919 formed their own Irish Parliament, the 'Dail Eireann,' and initiated a policy of murder and violence as a means of gaining their own ends.

They scorned the Irish Government Act, 1920, which gave Ireland the Gladstonian form of Home Rule; but gave Ulster[1]—officially Northern Ireland—its own Parliament. This solution Ulster accepted. Sinn Fein continued to murder soldiers and police and to assassinate civilians and Government officials; and to burn, boycott and intimidate those who refused to bow the knee to the gunmen. Its killings were euphemistically designated 'executions,' or 'removals.' Its activities extended to

[1] That is to say the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, with the Parliamentary Boroughs of Belfast and Londonderry. The three remaining counties of geographical Ulster—Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan—were transferred to Southern Ireland.

Great Britain, where arson and bomb outrages were the arguments it employed to show its fitness for Home Rule. ' Reprisals ' were the answer in Ireland. Where Sinn Fein committed an outrage physical action was employed in reply. Ireland was in a state of seething lawlessness.

The opening of the Northern Parliament (June 1921) gave an opportunity for a truce, and Southern Ireland was invited ' to take her place in the great association of free nations over which His Majesty reigns.' She was offered ' the status of a Dominion ' —a grant of Home Rule to a degree which Mr. Gladstone never contemplated.

There followed protracted negotiations, which were concluded in the early morning of December 21st, 1921, by which Ireland was given the same constitutional status ' in the Community of Nations known as the British Empire ' as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa. Henceforth she was to be the Irish Free State, with powers greater than those the Irish Nationalist Party ever dreamt of demanding, but without Ulster, or, rather, without some part of geographical Ulster, since a commission was to define the boundary of Northern and Southern Ireland.

The surrender was accepted by the majority of

Sinn Fein; but a minority—stern Republicans—declined to approve of anything less than independence. When there were no more British soldiers, police or officials to assassinate, these pure patriots[1] turned their weapons upon their own countrymen. Ulster, of course, afforded them many opportunities, until the Northern Government showed that it was too dangerous a game. Then the civil war was confined to Southern Ireland; and a bitter conflict ensued, in the course of which Michael Collins, the Sinn Fein leader, was killed (August 22nd, 1922) in an ambush similar to those in which he and his colleagues had trapped many a British officer.

Domestic Affairs.—The Coalition Government's handling of domestic problems was not too successful. The war had left many difficulties. One of the most pressing was the housing question. During the war few new houses had been built, and the housing shortage was acute. Prices and wages made the supply of working-class houses an economic impossibility; and resort was had to State aid. Unfortunately the scheme—the Addison Scheme—was badly controlled. The cost per house

[1] They were also really responsible for the murder of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson on his own doorstep in London (June 22nd, 1922). An objectless crime, the perpetrators of which the *Daily Herald* declared were 'actuated by the highest motives.' (August 4th, 1922.)

rose to an extraordinary figure; output was low; and the State was faced by a financially ruinous burden. Consequently the number of houses to be built under the scheme was limited; and, though the revision brought down costs, there was no substantial reduction in the shortage until the Unionist Act of 1923 gave encouragement to the private builder.

The Government's agricultural policy justly occasioned criticism. In 1920 the Agriculture Act was passed. It embodied an ambitious policy for the revival of that industry. Its main feature was a continuance of the war policy of subsidising arable cultivation by guaranteeing minimum prices for wheat and oats. It also continued the Agricultural Wages Board, and included important provisions relating to improvements and compensation for disturbance.

A heavy fall in prices frightened the Government, and it would not face the responsibility for the burden which the guaranteed prices would have placed on the State. Accordingly Ministers displayed an acute consciousness of the evils of subsidies, and proclaimed that every industry was henceforth to be on an economic basis.

In 1921 the agricultural policy of 1920 was entirely reversed. An Act was passed repealing the provisions relating to guaranteed prices and to

the Agricultural Wages Board. The Coalition programme of agricultural reconstruction collapsed.

The task of getting back from war to peace was not an easy one. Much of the industrial and social machine had been controlled for war purposes; and the Socialist Party, believing in State control as a principle, was reluctant to see a return to private enterprise. Railways were decontrolled, but not until some Ministers had disclosed a flirtation with the policy of nationalisation. The war was not without its permanent result, however, as a big amalgamation was effected in 1921, when the whole system was rearranged in four groups.

The coal mines were decontrolled in 1921; but the transfer was not completed without a serious strike, to which reference has already been made—the object being to prevent decontrol and to get the mines nationalised.

The various war restrictions on social freedom were gradually removed, but the curious may even now find that some of the more trivial are still in operation.

Industrially the biggest legislative enactment was the extension of the principle of Unemployment Insurance in 1920 to cover some 12 million workers. Even this measure was not sufficient to meet the unexampled slump in trade in 1921, which has persisted to this day.

One of the biggest tasks of the Coalition Government was the demobilisation of the Army. It was composed in the main of civilians to whom Army discipline was naturally irksome. It had been borne, generally cheerfully, whilst the country was at war; but when hostilities ceased the Army wanted to get back to civil life with as little delay as possible. It would have been wicked to have thrown the men upon the industrial market without prospect of employment. So the process of demobilisation was gradual, but it was not too prolonged. 'Key' men were quickly released; men with positions to go back to, or with firm offers of employment, followed. For others, many of whom had been serving when they would normally have been learning a trade, training facilities were supplied. Tools and stock for business were provided in other cases. Unemployment maintenance without contributions was paid where necessary. The cost to the State of the resettlement of ex-Service men in civil life amounted to over £230,000,000. The sum does not take into account the cost of war pensions or allowances to disabled men.

Peace Treaties Without Peace.—The Coalition Government's attention could not be concentrated upon domestic affairs.

In co-operation with the Allies, it had to frame the Peace Treaties. The most important was naturally that with Germany. This ambitious document was concluded in June 1919. It included President Wilson's scheme for a League of Nations, and was to a considerable extent based upon the 'Fourteen Points' which he had enunciated in January 1918.

In Western Europe it gave back to France Alsace-Lorraine. It placed the Saar Basin, a valuable coal-mining region, under the administration of the League of Nations for fifteen years. It applied the principle of 'self-determination' to the provinces of Northern and Central Schleswig, which had been taken from Denmark and appropriated by Prussia in 1866.

In Eastern Europe it made several complicated territorial adjustments. Polish independence was recognised, with plebiscites for certain areas. The Czecho-Slovakian State was established. Out of Serbia grew Jugo-Slavia. Albania became an independent State.

Many of the questions were long-standing problems. Internationally some were of only a minor importance; but in the eyes of those immediately interested they gave rise to acute but localised differences of opinion. Thus Poland disputed the provisions relating to Upper Silesia. Czecho-Slovakia and Poland had divergent views respecting

the future of the coal region of Teschen. The future of Fiume led to a serious difference of opinion, not only between Italy and Jugo-Slavia, but between the principals themselves—President Wilson threatening to withdraw if Italy obtained Fiume, and Orlando if she did not. Rumania and Serbia disputed over the Banat.

During the war these lesser nationalities had obeyed the instructions of the ' Big Four ' amongst the Allies. But, with the removal of immediate danger, restraining influences disappeared, and they proved unruly children. The failure of the ' Big Four ' to maintain their dictatorship was marked. A severer blow to the authority of the Peace Settlement was the refusal of the United States to enter in the League of Nations, though it was largely the creation of her President.

Outside Europe, Germany lost all her Colonies, which were placed under the control of the British Empire and other Allies. To them, and to Turkish territories which did not revert to Turkey, the ' mandatory ' system was applied, the controlling Powers holding the territories by mandate from the League of Nations, and not by absolute acquisition.

The Peace Treaty was presented to Germany to sign as it stood. In its compilation she had had no part ; and, although she signed, she did so under

protest, and with the intention of not giving effect to many of the clauses without a struggle.

The Treaty did not attempt to fix the amount of the German indemnity or the sum to be paid by way of reparation. It declared Germany's moral responsibility for all loss and damage suffered by the Allies, but that her resources were not sufficient to enable her to meet the whole cost of the war. As a practical measure, the demand was to be for the largest amount which it was believed that Germany could pay by way of reparation for damage and loss; but no punitive contribution was to be exacted.

The enforcement of the Treaty, and the task of trying to make Germany pay, has puzzled Allied statesmen to this day. An outstanding feature of the Coalition period of office was the series of conferences devoted to problems arising out of the Peace Treaties. The conference policy was in marked contrast to ordinary diplomatic procedure. Between January 1920 and January 1923 twenty-four conferences were held. They left no permanent mark upon political history; and, as they were organised with a certain amount of ostentation, the successive failures to produce results gave rise to dissatisfaction and derision. France, seeing no approach to a settlement of the reparations question,

acted independently, and in January 1923 occupied the Ruhr.

French policy was, however, as unsuccessful as that of Mr. Lloyd George. It was not until the end of 1923 that the question began to show an approach to a practical plane. In November of that year, with German consent, and with the co-operation of the United States, two Committees of Experts were established by the Reparations Commission. One produced a scheme for reparation payments, called, after its chairman, General C. G. Dawes, the 'Dawes Report.' It detailed a plan of payment by instalments which was accepted by Germany.

Nearly War.—The failure of the conference policy was a big influence in the overthrow of the Coalition; but the more immediate cause was the Near East policy of the Government.

The Treaty of Peace with Turkey was not signed until August 1920. It was never ratified, as the Turkish Nationalists refused to accept it, and they became the dominant party, ousting the Constantinople Government. Allied policy, moreover, was not united; and the Greeks, under the impression that they had the sympathy of Mr. Lloyd George, attacked the Turkish forces. At first they were successful, but they were ultimately compelled to

withdraw from Asia Minor. Turkish spirits rose; and the Nationalist Government threatened to close the Straits—the neutralisation of which had been a fundamental condition in the Peace Treaty. Greece wanted to march on Constantinople, but was forbidden by the Allies. A British force was in occupation of Chanak—a promontory on the Asia Minor coast, the holding of which is essential to the command of the Straits. The French and Italian Governments refused to allow contingents of their troops to join the British force, which was thus left to maintain its position alone. The British Government determined, if need be, to defend the freedom of the Straits without the assistance of other Powers. British naval and military forces were strengthened; and an S.O.S. call was made to the Dominions, which was interpreted in some quarters as very little less than a declaration of war against Turkey.

By a hair's breadth only was war avoided. Lord Curzon, between whom and the Prime Minister there were differences of opinion, attended a meeting of Allied Powers in Paris (September 20), and was successful in inducing them to send a joint invitation to Turkey to attend a conference to settle the terms of peace.

The episode gave the final blow to the Coalition. The events which led to the possibility of war disclosed irregularities of procedure, and, to many,

such a failure to appreciate the gravity of the issues involved as to make the continuance in office of the Prime Minister a serious danger. To work in harmony with the Allies was regarded as the keynote of British policy; and events had shown that this the Prime Minister was unable to do.

The conference at Lausanne (November 1922 to February 1923) broke down, after eleven weary weeks, as Turkey refused to sign the Treaty. The conference was resumed in April. A Treaty was signed in July 1923 which was severely criticised, 'by those,' said Lord Curzon, 'whose motives in making the attack were not free from suspicion.' The terms were the best that could be obtained; but it was not such a Treaty as could have been concluded in 1919, or subsequently, had Allied policy been united. It was, in fact, a political success for Turkey, and it marked a further failure of Coalition policy.

The End of Coalition.—A meeting of Unionist Members of the House of Commons was held at the Carlton Club on October 19th, 1922. Unionist Peers, except Ministers, were not invited. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, from the Chair, pressed for a continuance of the Coalition. The opposite view was taken by Mr. Stanley Baldwin, and he was supported by Mr. Bonar Law. The Earl of Balfour

spoke for Coalition. The majority, by 100 votes, favoured fighting the Election as an independent Party, with its own leader and its own programme.

So the Coalition disappeared. On the same day Mr. Lloyd George resigned. A more representative Unionist Party meeting invited Mr. Bonar Law to become leader of the Party. This invitation he accepted, not without some misgiving as to his health; and on the same day he took office as Prime Minister.

He was not, however, to have the co-operation in his Government of a number of Unionists, who, as Coalition Ministers, and dissenting from the decision of the Carlton Club meeting, felt themselves unable to take office in an independent Unionist Government. Among them were Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Lord Balfour and Lord Birkenhead.

Their motives were appreciated; but the General Election—Parliament was dissolved on October 26th—was necessarily somewhat confused, and there were some platform taunts that the Government was one of under-secretaries and second-class brains who had been taken from the 'kitchen.' But the country passed a vote of confidence in the new Government by returning the Unionist Party with a majority of 75 over all other Parties in the House of Commons.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNIONIST REVIVAL

Thus ended the attempt to form a new Party out of the Coalition of Unionists and Liberals which the war had brought into existence. The scheme was never acceptable to the Unionist Party in the constituencies; and the opposition of the rank and file largely contributed to its abandonment. Henceforth the Unionist Party was again to be independent and to rely upon itself. The verdict was not openly challenged, though there was, from time to time, evidence of underground influences endeavouring to re-establish co-operation with Mr. Lloyd George by decrying Unionist leaders who had taken a prominent part in bringing the Coalition to an end.

It was regrettable that Mr. Bonar Law's health could not stand the strain of office as Prime Minister. He resigned—a dying man—in May 1923. He died in October, having given his life for his country as much as if he had fallen in the Great War.

Mr. Baldwin, then Chancellor of the Exchequer,

succeeded him as Prime Minister, and was elected leader of the Unionist Party.

A Short Government.—In its first and only session, the Government had a good legislative record. The Chamberlain Housing Act proved by its results to be an effective encouragement to the erection of new houses. An Industrial Insurance Act regulated working-class insurance in the interests of policy-holders. A new Workmen's Compensation Act extended the law and increased the compensation payable. The Government decided to make Singapore a defended naval base capable of taking the largest ships. Its foreign policy had no time to develop, but Mr. Bonar Law's pledge, that the direction of foreign affairs was again to be in the hands of the Foreign Secretary, was welcomed as a relief from the previous practice, under which the Prime Minister conducted our relations abroad in an atmosphere of imposing but barren conferences and constant panics and crises.

One important conference was, however, held in the United States. At this Mr. Baldwin, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to a settlement respecting the payment of our war debt to America.

Unemployment was causing grave concern ; and

Mr. Paldwin, now Prime Minister, in a series of speeches, the first of which was at Plymouth in October, outlined a policy of fiscal reform by which, by protecting the home market, there would be a greater volume of home trade for British labour. In addition to duties on foreign manufactured goods, there were to be substantial preferences to Empire produce on the lines endorsed by the recent Imperial Economic Conference, involving new duties on articles of food of foreign production. Wheat, flour, meat and certain other articles were not to be subject to duty ; but over remaining articles of food the Prime Minister demanded a free hand. Agriculture was to be subsidised at the rate of £1 an acre on arable holdings—the subsidy to be met out of the proceeds of the duties on imports.

It was a bold policy, clearly put in a series of speeches ; but it required the endorsement of the country, as Mr. Bonar Law, at the General Election of 1922, had definitely ruled out the question of a change in our fiscal system.

Mr. Baldwin put the issue to the test. Though it was a surprise to the electorate—vastly different in size and composition from those previously called upon to give a verdict on the fiscal question—and though the Liberal Party recreated the old bogeys of the ' little loaf ' and ' everything dearer,'

the result was not the overwhelming victory for 'Free Trade' which it anticipated. In fact, the pure 'Free Trade' Party—the Liberal Party—was the smallest of the House.

The Unionist Party came back the largest Party; but it could be out-voted by a combination of Socialists and Liberals.[1]

It was so out-voted. Mr. Asquith, notwithstanding the fact that a large number of his supporters had vigorously opposed the Socialists, coalesced with them in defeating the Unionist Government (January 21st, 1924).

Mr. Baldwin resigned; and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, as leader of the Socialist Party, became Prime Minister. It was the first Socialist Government Great Britain had experienced; and Mr. Asquith consoled himself with the reflection that if it misbehaved he could turn it out.

Socialists on Probation.—One can well understand the prestige which the Socialists hoped to obtain by forming a Government. Many of them had been in Parliament for years. Some had been Ministers in Coalition Governments during the war. But this was to be their own Government; and there was more than the chance that they might

[1] Unionists, 258; Socialists, 191; Liberals, 159; Independents, 7.

successfully manœuvre to be turned out on a question which would lend itself to a popular appeal, as the result of which they would be returned at the consequent General Election with an independent majority.

Until it was forced by events to take an independent line, which was its undoing, the Socialist Government proved to be the most ordinary of administrations, differing in no wise from those which had preceded it. One might almost have fancied oneself back to pre-war days, before Mr. Lloyd George invested a Liberal Government with a certain amount of energy and fight. Mr. Snowden, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced an orthodox Free Trade Budget. Mr. Tom Shaw, as Minister for Labour, followed the accepted Liberal policy of bewailing the extent of unemployment, but regretted that he could not produce rabbits out of hats! The Secretary for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary for Air efficiently administered their respective departments. The President of the Board of Trade buried himself in his blue-books. The President of the Board of Education looked after the affairs of that office; and the Secretary of State for the Colonies made innumerable speeches full of most excellent loyal and patriotic Imperial sentiments, and gave

every indication of thoroughly appreciating the high position to which he had been called.

The difficulties were to arise in the departments of the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary. An obscure Socialist paper, the *Workers' Weekly*, in July published an article urging disobedience to orders and the establishment of Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Committees—ordinary Socialist propaganda, not differing much from the Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils advocated in 1917 by Socialist leaders, except that, as we were then at war, there was a degree of sedition attached to the earlier movement which was not part of the later one.

For some reason the Socialist Attorney-General authorised the institution of proceedings, and one Campbell, the editor, a severely disabled ex-soldier, who, whatever his views then, was fighting for his country when many Members of the Socialist Government were otherwise engaged, was arrested. This action angered many rank and file Socialist Members of Parliament, who felt the hypocrisy of arresting one whose views coincided with those held by some Socialist Ministers. The protest was effective. The Prime Minister intervened. He interviewed the Home Secretary, and the Attorney-General was able to spread the news that the prosecution would be withdrawn.

It was withdrawn, to the annoyance of Campbell and his associates, who boasted that, whatever excuse had been advanced in court, the real reason was pressure on the Government by some of its supporters. 'The course of justice in the Law Courts,' they said, 'had been changed by outside political forces into a triumph for the working classes over the capitalist class, not by scoring a legal success, but by a plain revolutionary victory.'

Questioned in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister denied that he had advised the withdrawal; but admitted later that he had 'expressed a view upon the prosecution.' It is not difficult to grasp the nature of the 'view' to which he gave expression, inasmuch as it was followed by the withdrawal of the prosecution by the Attorney-General.

The Unionist Party moved a vote of censure on the Government for its conduct in the matter. The Liberal Party confused the issue by proposing the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into the case. The Liberal motion was carried against the Government (October 8th, 1924); but, rather than permit its conduct to be exposed, the Prime Minister secured the dissolution of Parliament.

A Conservative Victory.—At the General Election the conduct of the Socialist Government was arraigned before a much wider tribunal, and there could be no doubt of the verdict. But the indictment contained other items as well.

The most important was the Anglo-Russian Treaty. One of the first acts of the Government had been to give full and unconditional recognition of the Soviet Government. Negotiations for a Treaty were begun. The Government refused to consider the question of a Government guarantee for a loan; and an official statement was issued to the effect that negotiations had broken down and no Treaty would be signed (August 5th, 1924).

Unofficial Socialists then took a hand in the proceedings. A 'formula,' and yet a second 'formula'—an expressive word—was concocted. The chief Soviet representative said: 'I accept.' The Socialist Government accepted too; and the Prime Minister put his signature to the Treaty, although it contained the guarantee of a loan of an unspecified amount.

Liberals formally expressed their opposition to the Treaty by a motion on the House of Commons order paper. It was not, however, discussed, as the Socialist Government, by the Dissolution, had appealed to the larger tribunal of the electorate.

On this question and the Campbell case the Election was mainly fought. The Bolshevik President of the Third International—Zinovieff—unwittingly helped to emphasise the folly of the Treaty by a 'very secret' letter to the British Communist Party instructing it how to proceed to paralyse the British Navy and Army and to plunge the country into civil war. The unkindest happening of all was that the Foreign Office (on October 10th) and the *Daily Mail* (on October 24th) became possessed of copies. The latter circulated copies to other London morning newspapers. Later in the day the Foreign Office issued the text of the letter, together with a protest to the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires as revised by the Prime Minister.

The Socialist Party was angry; but the Prime Minister kept silence over the week-end. He broke it to explain the sequence of events, and to say that he had wanted to see the draft reply before its issue 'in a fair copy for my signature;' but he said, too, that if the letter was authentic it had to be published at once, and he admitted that the Foreign Office 'believed honestly that it was authentic.'

He had himself come to no conclusion, he said. Nor could a Cabinet Committee, after the Election, come to a conclusion. It only remains to be said

that a deputation of Socialists on a visit to Russia could not find a copy of the letter 'in a loose file of typewritten documents in English,' which purported to be the file of correspondence with the British Communist Party, or in other archives of the Third International. They thus formed the opinion that no such letter left the office of the International !

It is not difficult perhaps to convince those who want to be convinced ; but the Unionist Government's inquiry found evidence from four independent sources of information which left 'not a shade or shadow of a doubt as to the authenticity of the document.'

The verdict of the country was that it did not want a Socialist Government ; that it did not approve of Mr. Asquith's action in putting the Socialist Government in power ; and that it did want, even more emphatically than in 1922, a Conservative administration.

From this point politics are matters of current controversy. The time to retell them is not yet.

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